InQuest

Chapter 4:
A woman scorned

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'Insulted' Senate detains 14 Standard Chartered Bank execs

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Ramon Revilla asks only 2 things of his daughter's fiancé

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Nida Blanca mom dies of pneumonia; 91

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Price war sinimulan ng Sun, pabor nga ba sa publiko?

CELLCARD KADA ARAW,
CELLPHONE KADA LINGGO! Text 2910 now!

Strong dollar, VAT bill spoil peso's six-day rally

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO'S six-day rally, which brought it into the P53-to-$1 level on Monday, was spoiled yesterday by the United States dollar's rebound across Asia as well as jitters over the congressional deliberations on the value-added tax bill.

STRONG/ A20

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Population not booming, says 'prophet of boom'

By Christian V. Esguerra

KAHIT ANG U.N. SINABI WALANG OVERPOPULATION!

WHO'S AFRAID of overpopulation?

Not economist Dr. Bernardo Villegas, senior vice president of the Uni-

POPULATION/ A7

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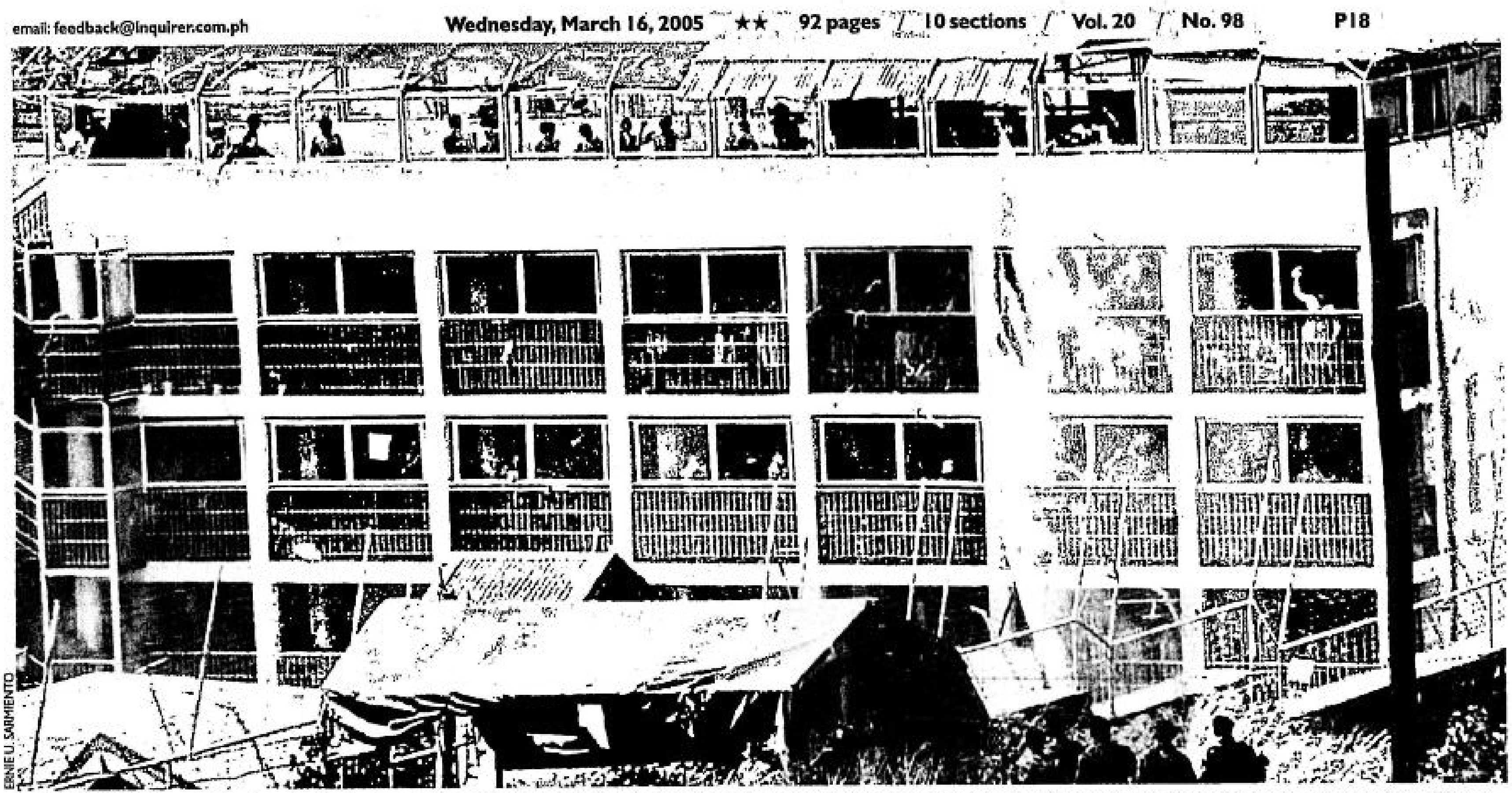


ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

AFTER THE FALL comes the cleansing. Water cannons hose down the aftéreffects of tear gas thrown in before the assault teams stormed Building B of the BJMP in Camp Bagong Diwa, Bicutan.

Stun bombs usher cell to cell attack

By Luige A. del Puerto

A CLUSTER of "flash bombs," thrown at strategic spots in the embattled jailhouse, signaled the start of the attack a few minutes past 9 a.m. yesterday.

"It's just acoustics. It makes a very loud noise. It is meant to startle the enemy," National Capital Region police chief Director Avelino Razon said as more than 100 commandos surged into the building on the 27th hour of the prison standoff.

Simultaneous with the stun bombs, the police lobbed canister after canister of tear gas into the building.

In the tense minutes that followed, fighting in the hallways, stairwells and even from cell to cell broke out.

Guns blazing, the raiders from

STUN/ A20

Cops storm jail; 23 dead

BIG THREE

ROBOT

Known as the smiling Abu leader, Galib Andang was wounded and captured during a firefight in Indanan, Sulu, in December 2003. One of his legs had to be amputated.

ROBOT/ A6

GLOBAL

Nadzmie Saabdulla, alias Commander Global, was considered the brains of the Abu Sayyaf, the "chief of staff" of the faction based in Sulu.

He was knowledgeable in Islam and a

GLOBAL/ A6

KOSOVO

Alhamser Manatad Limbong was a ranking Abu Sayyaf leader tagged as the one who beheaded American Guillermo Sobero.

Limbong, also

KOSOVO/ A6

Abu Sayyaf leaders fought to the death

By Luige A. del Puerto, Jocelyn R. Uy and Norman Bordadora

VIRTUALLY all they had were handguns but it was clear to the police commandos that the Abu Sayyaf bandits were ready to fight to the death.

"*Ang tatapang nila. Patay kung patay talaga* (They were gutsy. They didn't care if they died)," a Special Action Force officer said, recounting yesterday's ferocious police assault on a jailhouse in Camp Bagong Diwa, which left 22 detainees and one policeman dead.

"Theirs was to do or die," the officer told the INQUIRER as he left the smoking prison complex, sweating profusely and looking like he felt lucky to be alive.

The fatalities included three top Abu Sayyaf leaders who had sown terror for years in the country's troubled southern islands and beyond—Commander Kosovo or Alhamsar Manatad Limbong, Commander Robot or Galib Andang and Commander Global or Nadsmi Sabdullah.

ASG spokesperson Sadit Abdul Ganit Husim, known as Ka Lando, was also killed along with 18 oth-

COPS/ A6

A BIG HAND for our policemen and jail guards, Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes says after declaring the crisis over. Beside him, from right, PNP Chief Arturo Lomibao and NCRPO Chief Avelino Razon. JESS YUSON

GMA hails police; Muslims dismayed

By Christine O. Avendaño and Tarra V. Quismundo

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo commended law enforcers for yesterday's assault on Camp Bagong Diwa that led to the killing of 22 prisoners, but Muslim leaders said the bloodshed could have been avoided had authorities been more patient.

Ms Arroyo went on radio to defend the police action hours after Interior Secretary Angelo

GMA/ A9

Cool, casual UK-trained cop talked to Abu leaders

By Arlyn de la Cruz
Contributor

A POLICE officer, who was trained here by experts from the United Kingdom to handle a hostage crisis, negotiated directly with members of the Abu Sayyaf holed up on the ground floor of the four-story Building B in the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology compound in Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig.

Handling his first actual hostage situation, Supt. Efren Yebra used mainly "Filipino words" and spoke in a casual and engaging manner.

"*Ikaw naman, nandito silang lahat sa harap ko. Ano ang hindi mo paniniwalaan? Eh kung ikaw kaya ang hindi ko paniwalaan. Dapat patas. Paniniwalaan kita, paniniwalaan mo ako* (They're all here in front of me. What would you rather believe? What if I don't believe you. It should be even-handed. I'll believe you and you will believe me)," Yebra told one of the Abu Sayyaf leaders.

Yebra uttered these words when Comman-

COOL/ A6

'We've won battle, but not the war,' prosecutor warns

By Armand N. Nocum and Dona Pazzibugan

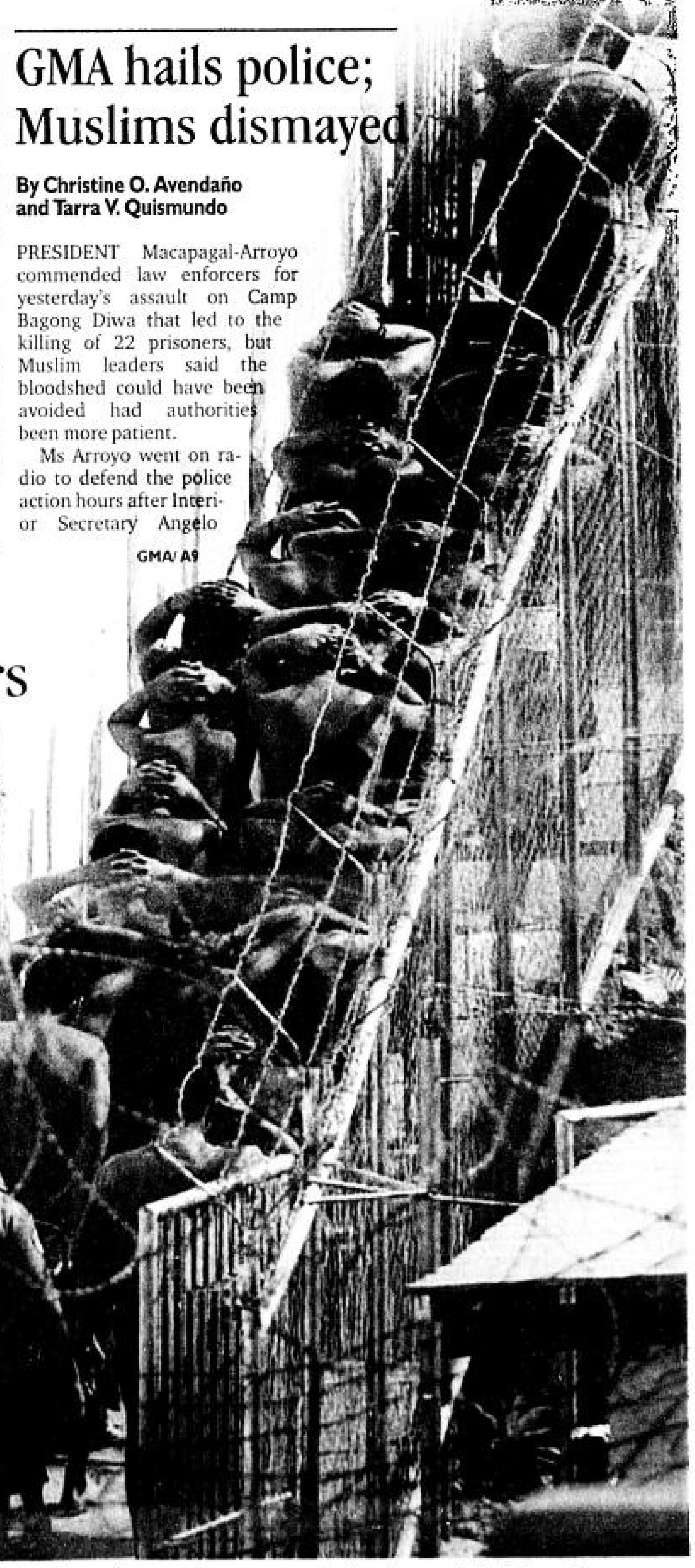
THE MILITARY yesterday braced itself for retaliatory attacks from the Abu Sayyaf.

The deaths of Commanders Global, Robot and Kosovo and 19 other prisoners in Camp Bagong Diwa will encourage young Muslims to take up their cause as they are now considered "shaheeds" (martyrs), according to a prosecutor handling the criminal cases of the bandit group.

Although the top echelon of the Abu Sayyaf has been decimated, it is unlikely that the group will just fade away, State Prosecutor Peter Medalle said yesterday.

"The government should not have the delusion that it has won the war. This will only reduce the (Abu Sayyaf's) capability, but not render its cause

WE'VE/ A5



STRIPPED to their briefs, inmates were brought out to the open grounds after the smoke had cleared to be searched before being led into the administration building for interrogation. ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2005

Second FRONT PAGE
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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/03/16/05

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Bankers 'insult' Senate, are detained

By Doris C. Dumlao and TJ Burgonio

THE WRONG choice of words could land you in detention.

This is what happened to 14 top officials of UK-based Standard Chartered Bank whom a Senate committee ordered detained for six hours yesterday, citing them in direct contempt for calling the ongoing public hearings of the committee "in aid of collection" and not "in aid of legislation."

Held in detention on a motion by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile and unanimously approved by the seven-member Senate committee on banks, financial institutions and currencies were the bank's country CEO Paul Simon Morris, COO Sundara Ramesh, corporate banking head Michaelangelo Aguilar, consumer banking head Owen Belman, treasury head Ferdinand Tansingco, credit cards and personal loans head Sanjay Aggarwal, chief finance officer Rajamani Chandrashekar, legal and compliance officer Marivel Gonzales, financial controller Chona Reyes, external affairs head Zenaida Iglesias, trust and investment services head Ma. Ellen Victor, head for banking services Ramona Bernad and the bank's legal counsels Reynaldo Geronimo and Fernando Arguelles.

The 14 SCB executives, who included five foreigners, bewailed the Senate's decision to cite them for contempt and detain them for six hours.

The Senate committee was apparently offended by a statement contained in a motion filed by the British bank with the Supreme Court on Friday that said the hearings of the committee were actually 'in aid of collection" and not really "in aid of legislation."

But Geronimo, SCB's lawyer, explained that the phrase "in aid of collection" in their petition was culled from a statement of Enrile himself during a hearing on Feb. 1.

"How can we be in contempt of the Senate when we merely picked up the idea from the senator himself?" he said.

Geronimo said Enrile, in response to an interpellation on Feb. 1, had admitted that his aim, among other things, was "to require the restitution of the entire amount from the bank."

"To require restitution," was exactly what the bank meant by the phrase "in aid of collection," he said.

STANDARD Chartered Bank chief executive officer Paul Simon Morris (left) and the bank's lawyers Reynaldo Geronimo (center) and Marivel Gonzales (right) head to the office of the Senate sergeant-at-arms where they and 11 other bank officers were detained for six hours after they were held in contempt for "insulting" the Senate.

SCB, the oldest foreign bank in the country, filed a motion with the Supreme Court on Friday seeking to stop the investigation of an alleged P8-billion securities fraud.

"What did they mean—that we were being urged by some interest to collect money from them?" Enrile said.

"It was a slur; it was an insult. It was a slur against the integrity of the committee of the Senate, to Congress itself and to the Republic itself. My God, this is an institution of the Republic," Enrile said.

Senate bank committee chair Edgardo Angara was likewise irked by the bank's statement in the SC petition.

"We just want to bring home the point that you can't just insult the lawmaking body of the country and get away with it," he said in an interview.

Angara and Enrile grilled Morris on why such a motive was imputed, but the latter merely said it was upon the advice of the bank's lawyers.

"Are you suggesting this committee was tasked to conduct this investigation to act as collection agent? To collect money from you?" Enrile asked Morris.

But Geronimo said the Senate committee should not have taken offense since the same issues being looked into by the committee "have already been pre-empted by the courts."

"The events of today will not alter the legal facts and issues on which this matter is being litigated in the courts of the land," he said.

Before the hearing was suspended, Morris apologized to the senators, saying the pleading submitted to the SC was upon the advice of the bank's lawyers.

But Angara was unmoved by the apology. "You call me a thief and then you'll apologize," he said, adding he was not worried the incident would send a negative signal to investors.

The hearing was suspended when the bank officials were sent to detention on the ground floor of the Senate building. They were detained from noon to 6 p.m. yesterday.

Emerging from the detention room, the SCB executives looked relaxed and were smiling.

"We were treated perfectly well and very decently. Many thanks to the sergeant-at-arms. We've got no complaints at all," Morris told reporters.

GMA signs '05 budget, finally

By Christine O. Avendano

FINALLY, the government can operate on a new budget for 2005—three months into the year.

In the presence of legislators, who weeks ago were at war over the Senate's hasty approval of the national budget, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday signed in Malacañang the General Appropriations Act of 2005 allotting the government spending money amounting to P907.6 billion.

In simple ceremonies, Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs Gabriel Claudio lauded the approval of the budget, saying this was the first time in legislative history that Congress "achieved partisan and interchamber unanimity" in approving a national budget that was "faithful to the original purpose of the executive."

"Hence, this marks the first time as well that a sitting President will not resort to the exercise of presidential veto powers in any single line in the budget bill," Claudio said, drawing applause from the government officials and legislators attending the ceremonies.

Just weeks ago, senators and congressmen were locked in a verbal war after the Senate adopted in toto the House version of the spending package, leaving no room for a bicameral conference meeting.

Under the House version, which was also endorsed by Malacañang, senators will each receive P120 million in pork barrel funds, while their House counterparts will get P40 million each. The congressmen were said to be hoping to restore their allocation to P70 million when the bicameral conference would be convened.

Present at the signing were Senate President Franklin Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Sen. Manuel Villar, Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr., Deputy Speakers Raul del Mar and Gerry Salappudin, and Rep. Rolando Andaya.

Drilon said the approval of the national budget would equip the government with a "road map" for its expenditures.

"We look forward to a more structured spending of government given the guidelines in this skin-and-bones budget," Drilon told reporters.

Villar, who orchestrated the hasty approval of the budget, said he talked to De Venecia and asked for Congress' assurance that next year's budget would be passed "on or before Dec.31."

"As I said before, the budget is very important," Villar said in a press statement. "It is our duty to pass a national budget. Failure to enact a new budget every year paints a bad image of the country to the international community."

Commission holds Abu, Reyes appointments

By TJ Burgonio

BY A vote of 5-2, the Commission on Appointments yesterday deferred the confirmation of Gen. Efren Abu as chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines after a military officer opposed the general's nomination on the grounds that he had blocked the officer's promotion.

At the same time, the CA did not act on the confirmation of Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes to allow him to focus on the prison crisis at Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig.

Reyes was deemed bypassed because the CA committee on interior and local government did not schedule any hearing this week to tackle his appointment.

Abu, meanwhile, was bypassed by the CA mainly because of the objection of Lt. Col. Oscarlito Mapalo, who is facing court-martial for earlier criticizing the military's "rotten" promotion system.

Mapalo did not show up at the hearing but was represented by his counsel, Homobono Adaza.

Adaza questioned Abu's nomination, charging that the general had refused to recommend Mapalo to the next higher rank because of personal animosity stemming from the colonel's remarks on the AFP promotion system.

But a composed Abu said he did not know Mapalo "in person" and that the Army promotions board did not recommend the latter's promotion because he "did not meet the standards" set by the board.

Abu told the commission that Mapalo had claimed in his summary of information that he had obtained a master's degree in Business Administration from the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila and a law degree from the University of Sto. Tomas, a declaration that was later disputed by the two schools.

The certifications from PLM and UST, however, had not been authenticated, Abu admitted.

He also clarified that it was Gen. Narciso Abaya, his predecessor, who had ordered Mapalo's confinement to quarters at Camp Aguinaldo after it was recommended that he be court-martialed for criticizing the military in the media in September last year.

Mapalo was charged with conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman and for conduct prejudicial to the military service. He has reportedly failed to return to his quarters since December 2004.

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Gloria pays expropriated airport Terminal 3 a visit

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo paid her very first visit yesterday to the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3, which the government expropriated in December and has scheduled for opening in June.

The President made a 30-minute ocular inspection of the main sections of the building. She was accompanied by Vice President Noli de Castro, Cabinet secretaries, airport officials and employees, industry partners and members of the diplomatic corps.

Ms Arroyo's petite fuschia-clad figure stood out in the brightly lit and pleasantly cool terminal, a massive state-of-the art facility that the government is determined to make operational by June 21.

The President did not give a speech before the guests who had been invited by the Manila International Airport Authority to join her at the MIAA's 23rd anniversary celebration.

But she went around among the guests, speaking briefly with employees and gamely posing for souvenir pictures.

She also held a 15-minute closed-door meeting with her officials, including Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza, Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima and MIAA general manager Alfonso Cusi.

Mendoza told reporters that he and the other officials had been given "instructions to make sure that this (Naia 3) is operational by June."

"Of course, she'll be happy only when this is open," Mendoza said.

He said the government would implement an overnight transfer of the facilities and equipment from Naia 1 to the new terminal.

He added that there would be a continuous testing of the facilities, particularly the information technology system, to avoid problems when Naia 3 begins to operate.

Mendoza also said that he would be meeting with the airline companies to thresh out their concerns about the transfer.

The airlines, through the Airline Operators Council, have said they cannot meet the June 21 deadline, particularly because the MIAA has yet to give them their lease contract agreements.

"Hopefully, we can strike a deal," Mendoza said, adding that he hoped Philippine Air Lines would also transfer to Naia 3 from the Centennial Terminal.

Nikko Dizon

GMA backs reset polls

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo last night backed the postponement of barangay elections scheduled for October but asked local officials to help her in her campaign to inform the people about the importance of the value-added tax (VAT).

Ms Arroyo told officials attending the 7th National Convention of the League of Barangays that they were "at the vanguard" of her 10-point development agenda.

"Our national agencies and local governments cannot move without .... support. For this reason I am reiterating my support to postpone the barangay election," she said, drawing applause.

There are proposals in Congress to postpone the election and hold it along with the national polls in 2007. *Christine O. Avendaño*

Chavez group files plunder raps vs Garcia

By Nelson F. Flores

LAWYERS Frank Chavez and Mario Ongkiko yesterday filed plunder charges against Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia (ret.) in the Office of the Ombudsman for allegedly amassing ill-gotten wealth amounting to at least P108 million.

Chavez, who heads Operation Clean Hands Inc., said they decided to file the charges against Garcia "because the government refused to do so," noting that the Arroyo administration only "filed [charges for] the petty crimes of perjury and falsification, giving rise to [the] illusion that the ranking [former] Armed Forces officer had already been haled to court."

Chavez added the suit against Garcia was the first of a series of plunder cases they would file against people in the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, as well as private individuals.

Aside from Chavez and Ongkiko, Operation Clean Hands Inc., an association of lawyers from nine law firms who are against corruption in government, was named a complainant in the plunder charge.

In their 11-page complaint, Chavez accused Garcia of having amassed at least "P108,181,500 by receiving cash and material gifts from persons and entities in connection with government contracts or projects of the military and by reason of his position as a general of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and deputy chief of staff for comptrollership."

Ongkiko said Garcia took advantage of his position to acquire the assets, a fact admitted to by no less than his wife, Clarita Garcia, who had stated in a letter to US authorities that her husband, "by 'common practice, receives cash and material gifts from persons and entities in connection with the awarding of military contracts."

"Indeed, respondent's regular income cannot possibly afford him the luxury of buying a P38-million condominium unit in New York City, USA; several luxury vehicles or [make] regular [trips] abroad with thousands of US dollars [in] pocket money," Chavez and Ongkiko alleged.

Stop Chingkoe from leaving, court urged

GOVERNMENT prosecutors yesterday asked the Sandiganbayan to reconsider its decision allowing tax credit scam suspect Faustino Chingkoe to leave for Canada.

In a three-page urgent motion for reconsideration, Assistant Special Prosecutor Elvira Chua said Chingkoe was a flight risk, noting that he held Canadian, Fijian, Korean and Philippines passports.

She also said Chingkoe, head of the Chingkoe group of 11 companies, appeared to be winding down his business affairs in the country.

"For one, his business conglomerate in the Philippines has dwindled as shown by the fact that his principal corporation, Diamond Knitting Corp., has not been submitting the required quarterly production sales report to the Board of Investments," Chua said.

She pointed out that Chingkoe was facing criminal charges in the Sandiganbayan for which if convicted he would be forced to pay back more than P131 million to the government.

Essentially, the cases against Chingkoe stem from the wrongful use of tax credit certificates.

On March 9, the Sandiganbayan Fourth Division chaired by Associate Justice Gregory Ong granted Chingkoe's petition to travel abroad, specifically to Hong Kong, the United States and Canada, between March 16 and April 16 subject to certain conditions, despite the opposition of government prosecutors.

Among the conditions were Chingkoe's strict adherence to his declared itinerary, the posting of a P2.5-million travel bond, and that he report to the court within five days of his return to the country.

The fourth division had previously allowed Chingkoe to travel to Canada to attend his daughter's graduation.

But Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio believes Chingkoe will not return to the country.

He noted that Chingkoe's family, including his wife Gloria, was living in Canada although the government, through the justice department, was seeking their extradition.

"I suspect he has already completed the groundwork for his flight," Villa-Ignacio said.

Villa-Ignacio said the Bureau of Immigration had been furnished a copy of the motion for reconsideration in the hope that they would take action. He said, however, that it would be difficult to stop Chingkoe from getting out of the country should he decide to use any of his other passports.

Nelson F. Flores

RP rues, but accepts, beheading of 4 Pinoys

THE GOVERNMENT yesterday said it regretted the beheading of four Filipinos convicted of murdering a compatriot in Saudi Arabia but had no complaints about the conduct of the trial.

"This is a regretful incident and will serve as a reminder here and abroad to follow the rule of law," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement.

He said the government monitored and gave assistance to the four Filipinos since the start of the case, "which underwent several judicial proceedings with the interest of both parties properly represented by their lawyers."

"But we cannot influence the course of justice in other lands," Bunye said.

Hospital workers Miguel Fernandez, Sergio Aldana, Wilfredo Batista and Antonio Alviza were beheaded by the sword on Monday in the western Saudi city of Taif, after being convicted of knifing to death in January 2000 coworker Jaime de la Cruz and stealing his money.

Two other Filipino co-workers face prison terms of five and seven years each for their role in the crime.

Bunye said De la Cruz was killed "on the very day he collected a huge sum of money from an underground lottery."

The Department of Foreign Affairs, meanwhile, said it had at one point convinced the victim's family to accept a settlement of P3 million in "blood money" that would have spared the lives of the killers in accordance with Saudi law.

"However, the resolution of the case reached an impasse as the parties could not agree on the final arrangements for the payment of blood money," the DFA said in a statement.

In the statement, the DFA said the execution was carried out "without prior notice given" to the Philippine consulate in Jeddah. *Christine Avendaño, Volt Contreras and Jerome Aning*

Filipino, Japanese seamen kidnapped

JAPAN said Tuesday it was doing its best to secure the release of two Japanese and one Filipino who were kidnapped by armed pirates from a Japanese-registered tugboat in the Malacca Strait.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi ordered government agencies to work to rescue the three while Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda said Tokyo had yet to make contact with the hostage-takers.

"We don't know their objective of kidnapping the three. They have not contacted us," said Hosoda, Japan's government spokesperson, at a news conference.

Confirming that a Filipino was among those abducted, the Department of Foreign Affairs said it was leaving it to the owner of the Japanese vessel to negotiate with the pirates.

Pete Chan, executive director of the DFA's migrant workers affairs office, said this was the same tack adopted by the department when two Filipino seafarers were abducted also in Malaysian waters last year.

"We hope the Japanese owner will do the negotiation," Chan told the INQUIRER. "This is purely a commercial matter but we will be monitoring developments from our embassies."

DFA spokesperson Gilberto Asuque identified the captured Filipino as Edgardo Pagliawan Sadang, a 31-year-old third engineer. The others abducted were the boat's captain, Nobuo Inoue, 56, and chief engineer Shunji Kuroda, 50.

The remaining 11 crewmen from the tugboat were safe late Monday.

Chan recalled that pirates operating in the Malacca Strait attacked a Singaporean ship in October last year and seized two Filipinos—a captain and a first engineer.

The abductors reportedly demanded a "six figure" ransom in US dollars. The two Filipinos were later released although the ship owner denied making a payoff, he said.

Japan's foreign ministry set up a task force to handle the crisis and asked Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore for help, Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura told reporters.

"The government is doing its utmost for their swift release and understands that these countries are making their utmost efforts for us," Machimura said. *Volt Contreras; AFP*

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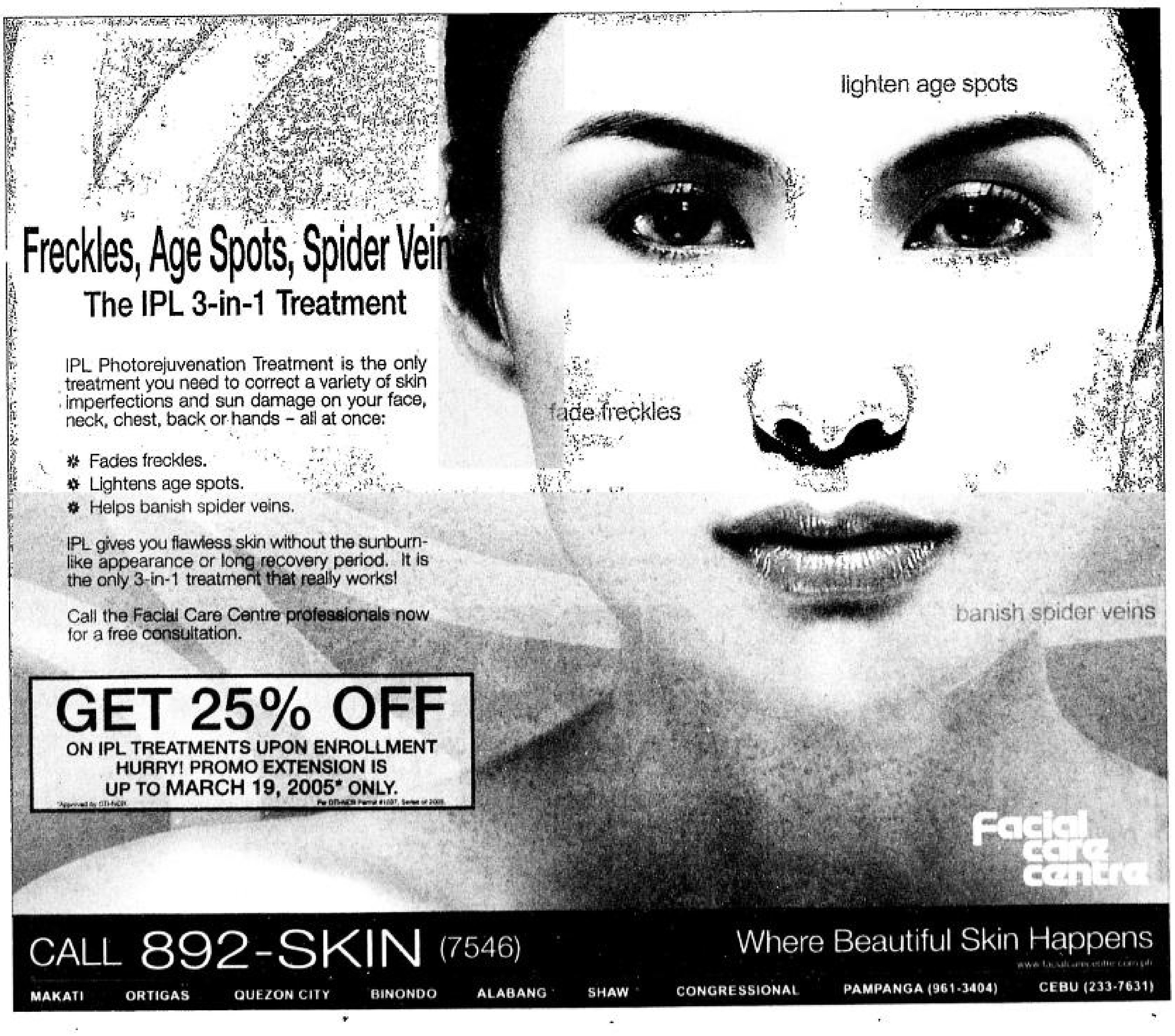

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Many health workers oppose Ligtas Buntis, ex-DOH exec claims

By Christian V. Esguerra

MANY more health officers and workers are against the "Ligtas Buntis" program but are afraid to speak out for fear of reprisals and harassment by their superiors, according to the former Department of Health spokesperson who has denounced the controversial reproductive health program.

"There were doctors who told me that they believed in what I was saying but apologized because they could not come out," said Ligaya Acosta, a former official of the DOH East Visayas office, who quit the department last month in protest of the health campaign that she said promoted contraception.

"They're not as brave as I am," said Acosta, who denounced "Ligtas Buntis" in January and has been openly campaigning with the Church against it.

She cited a Dr. Tony Ida as one such objector. She claimed that Ida was "demoted" from being DOH representative for Leyte to a mere coordinator after his superiors found out that his wife was involved in anti-Ligtas Buntis talks that Acosta had organized.

"The wife was going out with us because she was herself a victim of contraception," Acosta said.

Acosta has been involved in at least 10 anti-Ligtas Buntis seminars since she rejected the multimillion-peso program that the Church is opposing.

The seminars are focused on the evils of contraceptives, information which she said health officers were keeping from the public in the Ligtas Buntis campaign.

Contrary to the DOH position that it was only trying to make the public come up with "informed choices," Ligtas Buntis was essentially meant to promote only contraceptives, Acosta alleged.

"The Church was right all along," said the former DOH media relations officer and administrative officer who once also chaired the regional social mobilization committee.

"We are calling on all those who suffered from the ill effects of contraceptives to come out," she said.

She said former colleagues at the DOH's Eastern Visayas office had been "banned" from communicating with her since she filed an application for terminal leave on Feb. 28. The application should have taken effect on Feb. 14.

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Corrections

IN YESTERDAY'S banner story, "Abu inmates seize prison," the Anak Mindanao party-list representative's name was misstated as Mujib Hataman. It should have been Mujiv Hataman.

* * *

YESTERDAY'S banner story in Metro, "Detained for failing to show his ITR," misstated that Roque Ablan Jr. was the Ilocos Sur representative. He is the representative of the first district of Ilocos Norte.

* * *

IN THE story "Execs cleared graft over reconditioned equipment" on Page 18 yesterday, there were some inaccuracies in the head and the last paragraph of the story. The Office of the Ombudsman affirmed that the P15 million worth of equipment bought during the term of former Dumaguete Mayor Felipe Antonio Remollo were brand new. A technical committee earlier declared the units as "reconditioned" but later changed the description to "not totally brand new." The Ombudsman said the description of the city's technical committee was more on the physical appearance of the equipment, something that should not outweigh their performance.

* * *

IN AUGUSTO Villalon's March 14 Pride of Place column titled "Heritage-Pride Movement Launched," the caption of a photo of the Santa Maria Church misstated that it was located in Vigan, Ilocos Sur. It is in Santa Maria, Ilocos Sur.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to Gerry Lirio, city editor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City; fax Nos. 897-4793/94; e-mail addresses:glirio@inquirer.com.ph and daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Raul Palabrica, readers' advocate, the same address and fax numbers as those of the city editor, and e-mail address:rpalabrica@inquirer.com.ph.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, March 16, 2005
5th Week of Lent

1st Reading: Dn 3:14-20,91-92,95
Gospel: John 8:31-42

Jesus went on to say to the Jews who believed in him: "You will be my true disciples if you keep my word. Then you will know the truth and the truth will make you free." They answered him, "We are the descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves of anyone. What do you mean by saying: You will be free?"

Jesus answered them, "Truly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave. But the slave doesn't stay in the house forever; the son stays forever. So, if the Son makes you free, you will be really free.

I know that you are the descendants of Abraham; yet you want to kill me because my word finds no place in you. For my part I speak of what I have seen in the Father's presence, but you do what you have learned from your father."

They answered him, "Our father is Abraham." Then Jesus said, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do as Abraham did. But now you want to kill me, the one who tells you the truth—the truth that I have learned from God. That is not what Abraham did; what you are doing are the works of your father."

The Jews said to him, "We are not illegitimate children; we have one Father, God." Jesus replied, "If God were your Father you would love me, for I came forth from God, and I am here. And I didn't come by my own decision, but it was he himself who sent me.

Commentary

You will know the truth and the truth will make you free. They claim to be free, through Abraham. Jesus is blunt and sharp. They sin. They are slaves and do not remain in the faith of the father's house, however, he as the son, remains. They want to kill him because of his words and so they are not children of Abraham. Jesus obeys and speaks of his father God, yet they do not obey their father in faith, Abraham. If God is our Father, then we love Jesus. And to love, is to hear, take to heart, be converted and obey, following Jesus' teachings and living by forgiveness, justice, truth-telling and defense of those in need of life. Who do we belong to?

God in Jesus' own Spirit? Or do we belong to nations and countries, groups, families and to our own designs? It is late in Lent and time for the hard truth to look us in the eye. Jesus, may we truly be yours.

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‘We’ve won battle, but not the war,’ prosecutor warns

From page A1

inutile,” Medalle, who is from Zamboanga City, said. “We have won the battle, but not the war.”

But the military said the deaths of key Abu Sayyaf leaders had undermined the group’s ability to launch terrorist attacks in Metro Manila.

“The command structure of the Abu Sayyaf Group, particularly in Metro Manila, is finally broken,” said Lt. Col. Buenaventura Pascual, the military’s public information chief.

He said the detained Abu Sayyaf leaders had been “in constant communication” with Abu Sayyaf operatives in the metropolis.

Pascual finds credible the claim of one of the alleged Makati bombers Gappal Bannah, alias Boy Negro, that Abu Sayyaf leaders detained at Camp Bagong Diwa had been calling the shots for operations in Metro Manila.

With the arrest of Bannah and his alleged co-conspirators Gamal Baharan, alias Tapay, and Angelo Trinidad, alias Abu Khalil, “I doubt if they still have a cell in Metro Manila,” the military public information chief said.

But should the remaining Abu Sayyaf leaders like Khaddafy Janjalani or Radullan Sahiron send a new group of operatives to Metro Manila, “that’s another story.”

“The AFP is ready for any eventuality or retaliation from remaining Abu Sayyaf (members)—whether in the metropolis or in the countryside,” Pascual said.

Accolades

Medalle was among the Department of Justice prosecutors who warned Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) officials two weeks ago that Abu Sayyaf members were planning to escape from the BJMP facility in Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan, Taguig.

One of those warned about the plan was JO4 Edgardo Dajay, who was killed during the failed jailbreak on Monday.

It will help if the government sees the Abu Sayyaf problem from the perspective of the group, according to Medalle.

“Insofar as the Abu Sayyaf is concerned, those killed are now called *shaheed*. They are not criminals, they are martyrs,” the prosecutor said, adding that the manner of their death is bound to gain accolades.

“To some Muslims, that kind of death is worthy of emulation. Some of them will be inspired and encouraged to take up the fight,” he said of the deaths of Global, Robot and Kosovo and the others.

Address root causes

Now that the top Abu Sayyaf leaders are dead, the government should work hard in addressing the root causes of the problems that spawn armed groups in Mindanao, Medalle said.

He identified the causes of violence on the island as poverty, social inequality and lack of opportunities.

“These people are prone to silver-tongued ideologues when they see no improvements in their lives,” the prosecutor said.

Medalle said the BJMP’s negligence, if not disregard, of the basic needs of Muslim inmates could have also sparked the failed escape.

“Muslim inmates have been complaining for so long about the lack of water and water is very important to them. They are religious people, so they need water for ablution. They pray five times a day. They need water five times, aside from their drinking water,” he said.

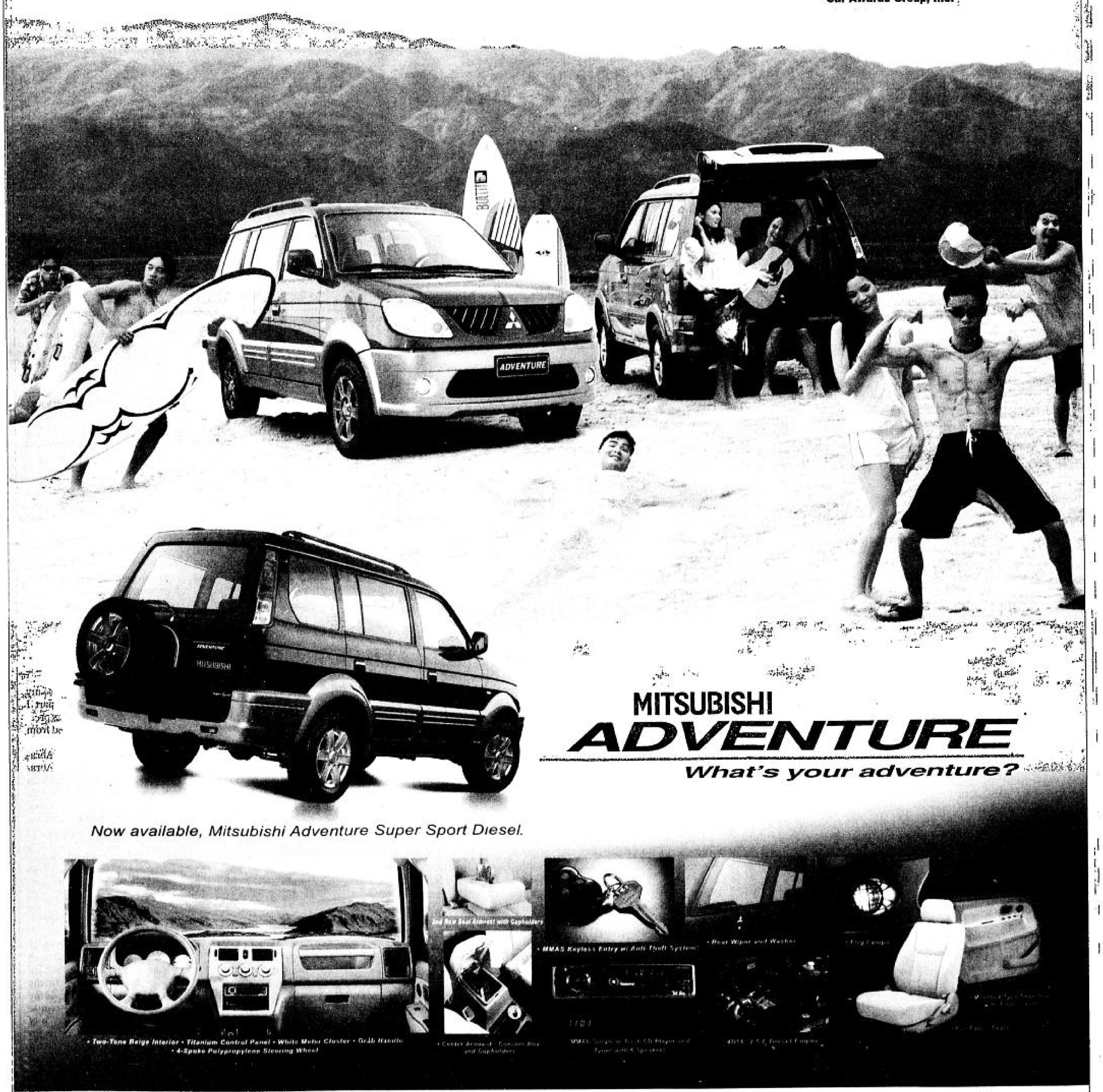
Such deprivation, he said, had given Abu Sayyaf members reason to believe that they were being subjected to religious persecution.

Vigilance

“What’s important is for authorities, who are in custody of these people, to be more vigilant in providing for all their needs,” Medalle said when asked how the government could stop a similar situation.

State Prosecutor Peter Ong said the death of an accused would have the effect of extinguishing his criminal and civil liabilities.

But Ong said the deaths of the Abu Sayyaf leaders and members would not affect the pending cases of their colleagues who survived the assault on Camp Bagong Diwa by government forces.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3 WARRANTY

MITSUBISHI MOTORS

Cops storm jail; 23 dead

From page A1

er still unidentified inmates.

As of press time, it was still not clear whether those who had died were all ASG men or not, or whether they had all taken part in the jailbreak attempt.

The bloody assault—marked by fighting almost from cell to cell *(Story on Page A1)*—ended the 27-hour standoff at the detention quarters called the Special Intensive Care Area (Sica).

One police officer was killed while six others were wounded.

Robot—whose bandit group had beheaded hostages they had taken for ransom—was found slumped near a .45-cal. pistol on the first floor of the four-story building.

Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes saw Global sprawled on the stairs between the second and third floors. The two other leaders, like Robot, lay lifeless on the ground floor.

Not in the memory of veteran reporters had that big a number of a guerrilla group died together in one battle.

Reyes warning

It was as though the bullets fired by the assaulting police units were specifically hunting for them.

"This will deliver the message that anybody who will try something like this will be dealt with in a similar fashion," Reyes said after the fighting had ended.

The standoff started on Monday at 6:45 a.m. when some of the Abu Sayyaf inmates overpowered their guards, grabbed their guns and shot three of them.

Officials said only about 10 to 15 Abu Sayyaf bandits were involved in the takeover of the prison.

Before ordering the attack, officials on the scene gave the prisoners 15 minutes to surrender, which was apparently ignored.

By the accounts of several members of the Philippine National Police's crack SAF teams, which attacked the jailhouse together with men from the Regional Special Action Unit, the fighting was fierce and deadly.

Gunfire in living rooms

The horrifying sounds and images of the fighting—including shouts of *"Tabi! Tabi!* (Give way! Give way!) from policemen—reached the living rooms of tens of thousands of homes across the country as television networks carried live the coverage of the drama—complete with a running commentary by National Capital Region commander Avelino Razon.

A total of 129 suspected Abu Sayyaf bandits and about 350 other detainees charged with kidnapping and drug pushing were in the building at the time of the assault.

Some of those who talked to the INQUIRER said the same thing—the detainees were heavily armed, some with long firearms.

But the official police statement released afterward said all that the raiders recovered from the scene were eight handguns and two unexploded grenades.

Lone PNP fatality

The lone police fatality was identified as PO1 Abel Areola of the SAF. He was among the first of the assault team to break into the suspects' stronghold.

Police who were with him during the assault said Areola died a hero's death. Although wounded, he continued to exchange fire with the bandits.

He sustained several gunshot and shrapnel wounds in the body, indicating the Abu Sayyaf had set off explosives.

He died on the spot.

Asked why it took the police nearly two hours to clear the area, one officer said the Abu Sayyaf men appeared to have sown portions of the building with booby traps.

Another SAF member said some of the detainees were armed with improvised explosive devices.

Also, the inmates had positioned themselves strategically, he said.

Gov. Parouk Hussin, a member of the crisis management committee which tried negotiations in hopes of persuading the inmates to give up, said Global had told him on the phone during the talks that he had no part in the building's seizure.

"It is a very sad development. But, you know, we exhausted all means," Hussin said.

'Crisis over'

"The crisis is over," Reyes said at about 11 a.m.

He spoke too soon. Half an hour later, several loud explosions again rang out through the jail.

Newly installed PNP chief, Deputy Director General Arturo Lomibao, said one ASG member had apparently hidden in Cell 23, and that he was "making his last stand."

"He is shooting it out with our men," Lomibao said.

Cell to cell fighting

Reyes said the assault team experienced great difficulty in breaching the building because the gates leading to the floors were locked.

Also, they had to sweep the floors "almost cell by cell," he said.

"We lobbed tear gas. Those that did not fight, we collected them, gathered them and gave them medical attention," he said.

Reyes said those who chose not to fight were told to hit the floor. They were not harmed, he said.

Razon said: "They fought it out. We saw that they had guns, and by the account of the team that entered, they really fought back."

Razon rejected suggestions that the police committed an "overkill" in the assault.

"There was no overkill. We made sure to exercise maximum restraint up to the last minute," Razon said.

Last stand

Most of those who died chose to make a final stand on the first floor.

If the police were to be believed, all the Abu Sayyaf leaders had died with guns in their hands.

But there was no independent corroboration of the claim.

Anak Mindanao Rep. Mujiv Hataman, who with Hussin tried to negotiate with the inmates to surrender, said there could have been "innocent" detainees among those killed.

Robot fell early

"We want to find out who were the ones killed that did not take part [in the jailbreak]."

Robot and Kosovo died in the initial exchange of gunfire, according to Senior Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil, PNP spokesperson.

"They fought it out," he said.

A top official told the INQUIRER that some of the gunmen inside had long firearms, including M16s.

"They smuggled them in [piece by piece]," he said.

Reyes said his office tried to locate and notify the relatives of those killed.

"We will give them utmost respect insofar as interment is concerned," Reyes added.

Asked if the bodies of Robot and the others would be autopsied before burial, Razon said: "Not necessarily."

Last words

In an interview on dzBB a few minutes before the attack started, Ka Lando firmly said his group was ready to die.

"After considering all peaceful means, we have reached the decision to take the final option," Reyes said at about 9 a.m.

The order was given to Chief Supt. Marcelino Franco to carry out the assault.

About 100 to 150 meters from the gates of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology facility, media men watched with their cameras and video cameras as explosions rent the scene.

Ambulances were stationed near the gates while a fire truck stood nearby. At least two PNP helicopters hovered overhead.

Among the policemen injured were PO4 Jose Modequillo, PO3 Napoleon Cabrera, PO2 Sandy Caoille and PO3 Arlito Franco.

"Something exploded at my side. Then my leg began to feel numb," Modequillo told the INQUIRER.

No overkill

A girl, aged 2 or 3 years old, was rushed to the medical dispensary at the height of the assault after she inhaled tear gas fumes. *With a report from Nikko Dizon*

Cool, casual UK-trained cop talked to Abu leaders

From page A1

der Kosovo's group raised doubts that members of the government's Crisis Management Team had signed the five demands the group had laid down as conditions for the surrender of the Abu Sayyaf members.

Yebra used a "local communications system" that was only accessible to him and "alias Lando" or Sadit Abdul Ganit Husim, who spoke on behalf of the Abu Sayyaf during the on-again, off-again negotiations.

All conversations were recorded, both audio and video, by police personnel.

Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes was the most senior government official of the Crisis Management Team that dealt with the Taguig situation. Decisions were referred to him for final approval.

The decision to launch the assault on Building B was made as early as 8 a.m. of March 14, barely minutes after Alhamzer Manatad Limbong, alias Commander Kosovo, snatched the service firearms of three of the guards on duty inside the building.

Taguig Mayor Fredie Tinga told the INQUIRER, "*Kahapon pa sanang umaga yan* (The assault should have been done Monday). But we have to find ways to settle this peacefully, *baka madaan sa usapan* (We might be able to talk it out)."

Tinga said this at around 11:30 p.m. yesterday.

Asked who made the decision, the mayor said: "Secretary Angelo Reyes was already contemplating assaulting [the building] but had to make consultations with different groups first, especially with the Muslim community to exhaust all peaceful means."

Tinga's statement indicated that the decision to storm the building was probably a done deal as early as 9:30 p.m. when Senior Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil, spokesperson of the Philippine National Police (PNP), announced that the negotiations had bogged down.

Before the assault, a sheaf of manila paper was placed on the wall, with the pictures of the Abu Sayyaf leaders in Building B posted on it.

The manila paper was used as a "board" on which the options and developments in the hostage crisis were written.

Five demands

The INQUIRER witnessed Reyes, PNP chief Arturo Lomibao, Tinga and the rest of the Crisis Management Team sign a document containing the following demands of the Abu Sayyaf members:

1. That they would not be bodily harmed;

2. That their human rights would be respected;

3. That the government would assure the speedy trial of their cases;

4. That their lawyer would be allowed to see them; and

5. That the Abu Sayyaf's appointed spokesperson "Ka Lando" would be available for media interviews.

Reyes agreed to sign the document because it was seen as something "doable" and "workable."

But Reyes signed the document after consulting an undersecretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government and a representative of the Taguig Muslim Community.

Talk with President

Reyes made a call to President Macapagal-Arroyo to inform her about the contents of the signed document.

Kosovo's group doubted that Reyes et al. had signed the document, that was why it was arranged that they personally meet with Reyes.

Lando came with another aide, also an Abu Sayyaf member later killed in the police assault.

Lando's face-to-face dialogue with members of the Crisis Management Team took place shortly after 5 p.m. of March 14 when fully armed members of the Special Action Force (SAF) were directed to leave the prison compound.

From noon up to 5 p.m. on Monday, Reyes was still a picture of calm, holding his horses and refusing to mention anything about the "final assault."

At around 7 p.m., Kosovo's group requested that they be given a chance to say their evening prayers. The Crisis Management Team agreed.

Reyes losing patience

At around 8 p.m. when the Abu Sayyaf members asked for food, Reyes was quoted by members of the Crisis Management Team as saying: "I am beginning to lose my patience."

When Reyes uttered those words, the PNP-SAF began to reorganize and an assault plan was laid down.

Party-list Rep. Mujiv Hataman said the request for food was meant to delay the resolution of the crisis. Police knew that the supply of food inside Building B was good for five days.

By 9 p.m., the media covering the standoff were asked to vacate the road leading to the main entrance of the BJMP.

The PNP-SAF began to take up their positions with at least four units assigned to various sections of the compound's outside perimeter.

Sounding apologetic, Gov. Parouk Hussin of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao said: "We did everything we could to come up with a peaceful solution. Up to the last minute, we tried to start another round of negotiations since that's what they wanted us for in the first place."

"It was really the last option available," Hussin added, referring to the assault by the PNP-SAF.

Reyes got unsolicited advice from a PNP officer at one point in the long hours of negotiation.

Cawa-cawa lesson

Chief Supt. Ismael Rafanan, PNP director for intelligence, approached Reyes to remind him of the Camp Cawa-Cawa hostage crisis in Zamboanga City in 1989. Rafanan was a junior Philippine Constabulary officer at the time and was one of the officers on the ground.

Rafanan's suggestion was simple: Reyes had to be positioned in an advance command post and not in the crisis area itself.

"That way, you could decide better and the men on the ground could be held liable for whatever it is that would take place," Rafanan said.

In 1989, then Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff Renato de Villa took all the blame for the Cawa-Cawa hostage crisis because he was there on the ground directly deciding on what would be the next step.

De Villa's alleged indecision, which earned him the nickname "Teka-teka" (literally, wait, wait) allowed Rizal Allih, who led the group that held hostage and killed Brig. Gen. Eduardo Batalla, to escape a military dragnet.

Reyes seemed to have followed Rafanan's suggestion when he left the place before 8 p.m. of March 14, following Lomibao who rushed to Malacañang before 7 p.m.

Make or break

But the next day, Reyes was again on the ground directly giving orders for the assault.

"It was make-or-break for him," commented an observer who witnessed the negotiations. "But he was willing to [put] his name and his head on the line, carefully calculating his every move and in the end, he knew he made a wise choice in staying put."

ROMEO GACAD/AFP

ALL TOGETHER then at their base in Bandang village in Jolo were top extremist leaders, from left, Commander Global, Abu Pula, Commander Robot and Mujib Susukan. Only Abu Pula remains alive.

Robot

From page A1

Speaking to then Mayor Maria Clara Lobregat from his hospital bed, the bandit leader meekly said that if he survived his injuries, he would reform and start a new life.

Andang was considered the most senior Abu Sayyaf leader that the military had captured so far.

Like Global, Andang was also involved in the Sipadan raid. He reportedly led the abduction at the Malaysian diving resort. Andang was also sued for the kidnapping of the six Jehovah's Witnesses missionaries and the beheading of two of the victims.

Posing for journalists

He often posed for journalists, spraying fire from his assault rifle in the air, warning the military of serious repercussions if they attacked the group's hideouts.

He gained further notoriety when he and his group seized the American missionary couple, Martin and Gracia Burnham, with several others from the Dos Palmas Resort in Palawan in 2001.

He also kidnapped a local teenage girl and forced her to marry him.

Before the Sipadan raid, Andang had been involved in a string of kidnappings, the military said. Andang had been tagged in the abduction of two Spanish missionary sisters in Patikul, Sulu, in January 1993, and of American cleric Fr. Clarence Bertelsman in Jolo, Sulu, in July 1994.

Other victims

His group, known as Ahmad, also snatched Chinese Xiao Liu in Jolo, Sulu, in July 1998; Cheung Wu and So Chi Ming in Tawi-Tawi in September 1998, and Malaysian Toto Keke in Zamboanga City in July 1998. They also seized locals, including Edwin Indoso in Jolo, Sulu, in March 2000; Patrick Viray in Sulu in February 2000; four local representatives of the Zizmore company in Sulu in February 1995, and some teachers in Sulu in September 1997.

He was also involved in the killing and kidnap of Indonesians who were forcibly taken from a Singaporean tanker.

MNLF lost command

Before he joined the Abu Sayyaf, Andang was a leader of the lost command of the Moro National Liberation Front, the mainstream Muslim secessionist group which concluded a peace agreement with the government in 1996.

Global

From page A1

wide reader, and the only one with a college degree (in criminology) from the Zamboanga A.E. Colleges.

He impressed even foreign journalists with his sincerity in pursuing his cause.

P5-M reward

Before his arrest in General Santos City on July 9, 2001, Global, who carried a P5-million bounty, plotted most of the Abu Sayyaf's activities, which included the raid and abduction of 21 people, mostly foreigners, from the diving resort of Sipadan in Sabah on April 23, 2000, and the subsequent detention of nine foreign journalists covering the Sipadan kidnapping.

He was tagged as the leader of an Abu Sayyaf group that seized two Hong Kong nationals and a Malaysian in Tawi-Tawi in 1998.

Global was also behind the kidnapping of American missionary Fr. Clarence Bertelsman in Jolo, Sulu, in 1997 and three Spanish nuns, also in Jolo, in 1993.

Ipil attack

But even with his major participation in the Abu Sayyaf activities, including the 1995 attack on the town of Ipil in Zamboanga del Sur where more than 50 people were killed, Global's name only became known when his group carried out a botched raid on the Barcelo Pearl Farm Beach Resort on Samal Island on May 21, 2001.

Dos Palmas raid

Military intelligence sources said Global was also one of the Abu Sayyaf leaders who raided the Dos Palmas resort in Palawan, where Americans Martin and Gracia Burnham and Guillermo Sobero were abducted along with 17 other people.

Global served as the Abu Sayyaf's spokesperson during the Sipadan kidnapping.

Abu Sayyaf followers related that whenever the leaders discussed certain issues, Global would sit quietly listening, and usually spoke only after everyone had exhausted his point.

When he spoke, they listened

When he did speak up, everyone listened, and almost always agreed with him. It was Global who composed statements to the media and letters to the negotiators, which were usually handwritten in a neat old-fashioned script.

He was arrested in General Santos City on July 9, 2001, with three of his men, who carried a bounty of P1 million each.

He was transferred from the Davao del Norte provincial jail to Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig in December 2001.

Kosovo

From page A1

known as Kosovo, was one of the Abu Sayyaf gunmen who raided Sipadan.

Among his victims he was known as "The Engineer" and a ruthless killer.

Fr. Gallardo's killer

He was identified as the one who beheaded two teachers whom the Abu Sayyaf abducted along with 43 others from four schools in Sumisip, Basilan, on March 20, 2000, and who executed Fr. Rhoel Gallardo on May 3, 2000.

He was arrested in March 2004 during a raid in Manila, along with three other suspected bandits. The authorities confiscated from the group about 39 kilos of TNT.

President Arroyo said then that the government had prevented a Madrid-level attack in Metro Manila.

Wanted by US

Aside from his involvement in the plot to bomb Metro Manila, Limbong was also one of the suspects in the 2002 Malagutay bombing in Zamboanga City where a US soldier was killed.

Shortly after his arrest, the United States sought his extradition. But then acting Justice Secretary Merceditas Gutierrez said Limbong could only be turned over after his trial before a Philippine court.

The US wanted Limbong to stand trial for the kidnapping of Sobero, the Burnhams and for the October 2002 Malagutay bombing in Zamboanga City that killed Sgt. Mark Jackson, an American Green Beret, and two Filipino civilians.

At the US District Court of Columbia, Kosovo was also facing charges of conspiracy to commit hostage-taking resulting in the murder of a US national, among other things.

He was said to be a hardened bandit who attacked an armored personnel carrier with a recoilless rifle during the Lamitan siege on June 2, 2001, killing a military lieutenant.

He was reportedly the second cousin of Abu Sayyaf leader Khadaffy Janjalani. *A. Nawal, PDI Mindanao Bureau and PDI Research*

Population not booming, says 'prophet of boom'

From page A1

VILLEGAS: We need the young to take care of the old.

versity of Asia and the Pacific and once described as the "prophet of boom," who insists that there is no truth to the doomsday scenario being painted by proponents and supporters of the government's family planning program.

Citing official figures from the National Statistical Coordinating Board (NSCB), Villegas said the Philippines' current population growth rate was only 1.94 percent and not 2.3 percent, as claimed by lawmakers.

"These statements about our population doubling are propaganda tools used by population controllers to frighten us," he said on Monday at a forum organized by the Human Life International-Asia. "All those claims that the population will double in 20 or 30 years—they are statistically false."

And lawmakers pushing for the passage of the proposed Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Act of 2005 (or House Bill No. 3773) are not about to accept this fact, according to Rosa Linda Valenzona, also an economist and a former social welfare undersecretary.

Speaking at the same forum, Valenzona said that at a previous hearing on the measure, the lawmakers summoned NSCB representatives to once and for all settle arguments over the current population growth rate.

"The NSCB representative told them it was only 1.9 percent, but the congressmen said 'You're lying!'" she said, adding:

"If you're saying that the NSCB is lying, you might as well close it—or Congress, maybe."

Not alarming

The Harvard-trained Villegas, a prominent leader of Opus Dei in the Philippines, said that based on the current trend, the number of Filipinos would peak only at 111 million at a population density of 370 people for every square kilometer.

He said the density would still be much lower than those of developed Asian countries, like Singapore (7,223), Hong Kong (6,501), Taiwan (625) and South Korea (483).

"What's so alarming with 370?" he said, pointing out that the Philippines' current population density was only 255 per square kilometer.

Villegas also said Filipinos should actually be concerned because the country would register zero population growth by 2025 because of a fertility rate of only 2.1 percent then.

"If you have 2.1, then you will just be replacing those who are dying. If it goes down, then the population will obviously come down," he said, citing the experience of Spain whose fertility rate was supposedly a pathetic 1.1 percent.

"Give them enough time and they will disappear," he added.

'Demographic winter'

Villegas said another key argument against population control was the rising growth rate of Filipinos aged 65 onward as against the decreasing growth rate of those belonging to the 0-14 age group.

Noting that the rate was picking up only at this point, he said the decreasing growth rate that began in the 1970s would persist until 2030.

"We must make full use of this dividend ... because by 2035, we will have more and more people aging and not enough people to take care of them," he warned.

Villegas said the country should learn from the current crisis in Japan called "demographic winter."

"In Japan, there are too many people living all the way up to 80 and 90, and not enough people have been born," he said. "So there will come a time when there will not be enough young people to take care of the aging population."

Villegas said China was already going through this crisis owing to its one-child policy: "What's happening is, because of the one-child policy, they are already experiencing the problem of a developed country like Japan. China is going to be the first country in the history of humanity that will have an aging population even before it becomes a developed country."

'Unico hijos'

Filipinos should not be fooled by China's high economic growth rate because more than 1 billion of its 1.3-billion population are still "living in dehumanizing poverty," Villegas said.

"China will pay very dearly for its one-child policy," he warned, adding that with a population of mostly elders, China would have very little support from its young.

Citing the Chinese preference for male children, Villegas said China's population would mostly be composed of "impossible male egoists who think that the whole world owes them a favor."

He said it would be almost impossible to motivate these young people to work.

"They will have a lot of males and very few females to marry, and those males will be impossible human beings because they have been *unico hijos* (only sons) pampered by two sets of grandparents and their own parents," Villegas said.

To drive home his point, he said: "China is going to be a very difficult country in terms of psychological motivation because of its phenomenon of *unico hijos* pampered by six people."

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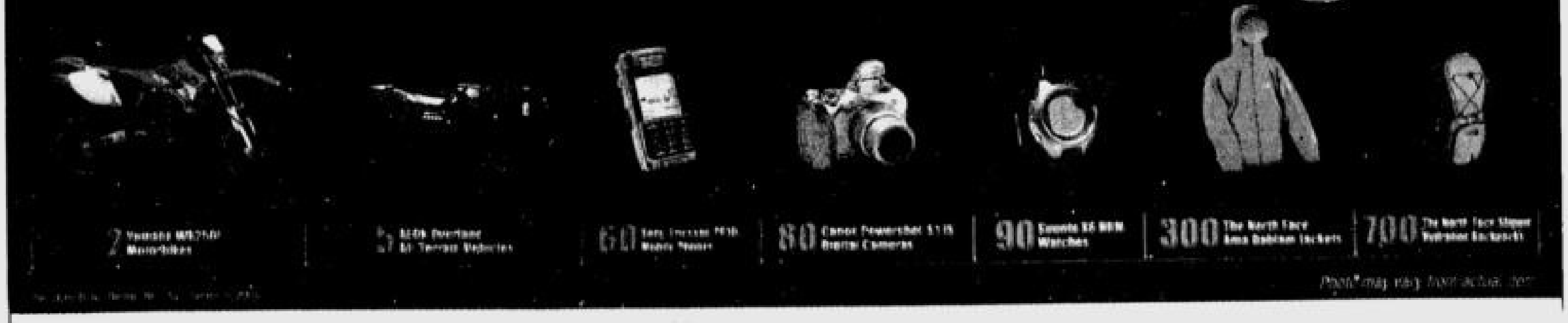

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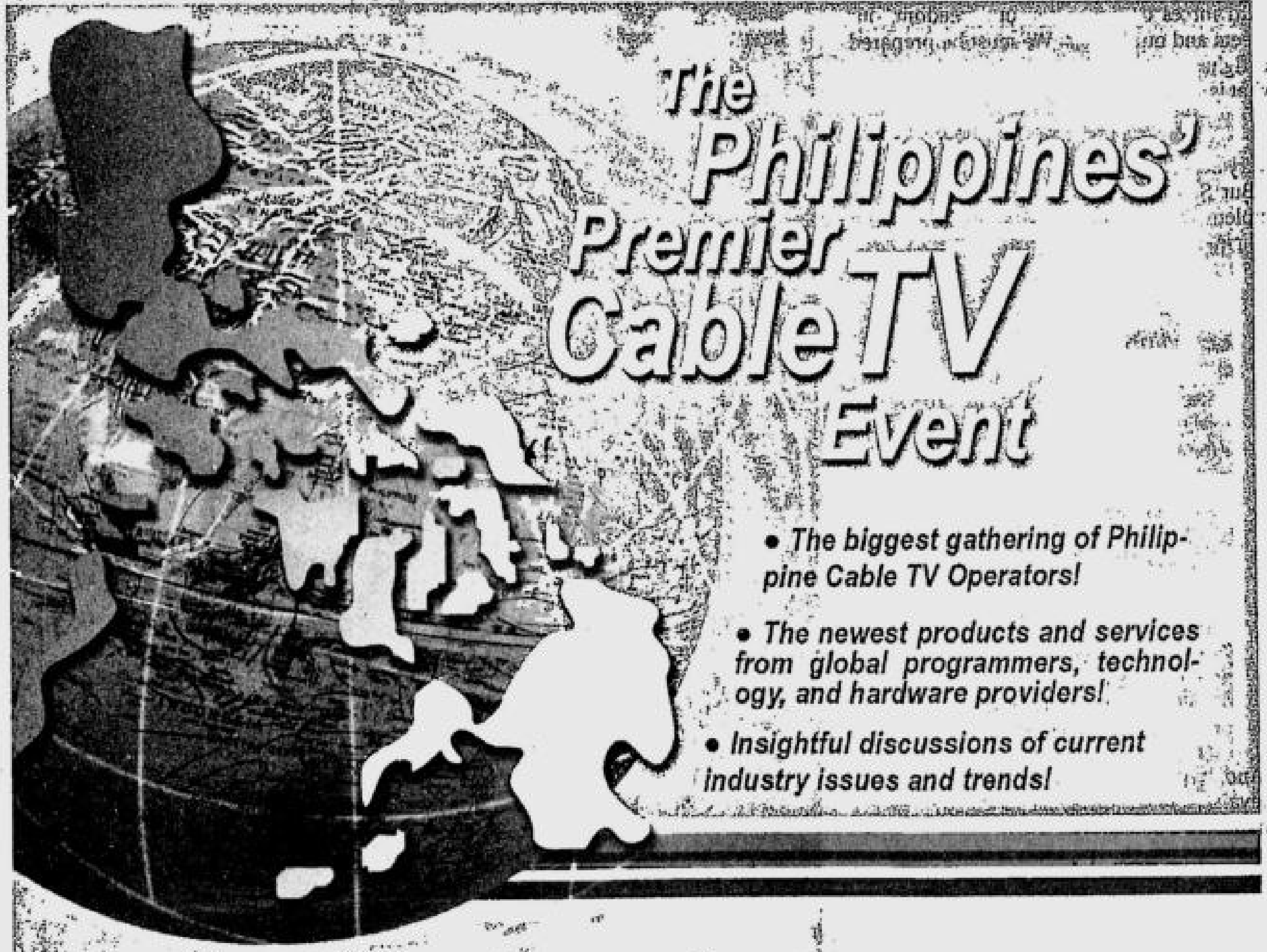

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GMA hails police; Muslims dismayed

From page A1

Reyes announced the "very successful" assault. It was the first time she made a statement on the matter since the prisoners' attempted jailbreak early Monday.

"I commend the government team led by Secretary Angelo Reyes that exhausted all peaceful means to resolve the Bicutan crisis, weighed their options after an extended standoff, and finally decided to use force as a last resort," she said over Radyo ng Bayan.

The President said her administration would make sure that a similar incident would not happen again, and ordered Reyes to conduct a full-scale investigation of the jailbreak attempt and "sanction those responsible."

She said Reyes had been directed to "fix up the jail system so that terrorists will be kept in permanently, without the chance to do harm, until freed by the courts."

But Muslim leaders expressed dismay at the outcome of the crisis at Camp Bagong Diwa.

"[The crisis] should have been settled through peaceful dialogue. The police should have given it time, four days maybe, but it seemed they were in haste. If they had waited, the [hostage-takers] could have been weakened and eventually surrendered," said Bong Alonto, president of the Alliance of Metro Manila Muslim Communities.

"We don't know if all of those who held other inmates hostage were guilty of their alleged crimes. We do not approve of what they did, but the police could have done more to settle the matter peacefully," Alonto said, and called for a comprehensive investigation.

Datu Amerol Gulam Ambiong, chair of the Metro Manila Muslim Peace and Order Coordinating Council, said: "Although we have never approved of the Abu Sayyaf's way of dealing with the situation, we are extremely saddened because the government attack resulted in the death of many innocent lives."

"The police should be able to account for the unidentified victims who were unfortunately killed" in the assault, he said in a phone interview.

'Best of justice system'

In a prepared statement, the President commended the law enforcers "who risked life and safety" and said they "exemplified the best of the criminal justice system."

She expressed sympathy for the families of those who were killed in the assault and the attempted jailbreak, and wished for the speedy recovery of those wounded.

She said the incident was "a lesson of sustained vigilance for all our people."

"We must ever be prepared to face the wayward forces that threaten our freedom, our streets and our homes. We must be prepared to fight evil with our moral will to uphold what is good and right," Ms Arroyo said.

She said her administration would not let its guard down, and that "we shall prevail in every battle for peace and freedom."

But Sen. Richard Gordon questioned the implementation of rules in prisons, saying policies on the control of firearms, the use of prisoners for janitorial services, and the transfer of inmates without searching for dangerous weapons seemed to be daily violated.

"We cannot afford a continued inefficient management of our penitentiaries," Gordon said in a statement. "We should thoroughly investigate the implementation of prison rules lest more families be orphaned and give [us] a bad reputation as a country with inefficient law enforcers."

Valid complaints

"Running priest" Fr. Robert Reyes observed that the police were "not schooled in the art of negotiation."

"We need professional negotiators whose perspective is to resort, not to arms, but to creative means in eliciting a favorable response from the other side," said Reyes of the Our Lady of Miraculous Medal parish in Project 4, Quezon City.

And while the means they chose to air their grievances was improper, the inmates who led the botched jailbreak were driven by valid complaints, Reyes said.

He pointed out that the inmates had sought respect for their basic rights, a stop to physical abuse they were allegedly receiving from jail guards, a speedy trial of their cases, redress of their grievances, and a chance to be given media coverage to tell the nation of their plight.

"We have to give them credit, they have embarrassed the government many times, and obviously, they are more intelligent than the military," Reyes said, referring to the times terror suspects had fled detention facilities.

Father Reyes and some members of the Alliance of Metro Manila Muslim Communities gathered at noon yesterday at the Ninoy Aquino Monument in Makati City.

Before an altar where the Koran and the Bible had been placed side by side, the assembly offered prayers for all those who lost their lives when negotiations were abandoned and police mounted the assault.

The people's support

But in a statement and an interview with reporters, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the supposed Abu Sayyaf bandits "got what was coming to them."

"The crisis team gave them all the chances to peacefully surrender," Bunye said.

He commended the crisis management team and the law enforcers for the successful assault, as well as Deputy Speaker Gerry Salapuddin and Anak Mindanao Rep. Mujiv Hataman for helping out the crisis management team.

Bunye stressed that the government did what was necessary, and expressed Malacañang's confidence that its actions had the support of the majority of the people.

He said the government would provide the appropriate assistance to the families of the dead and wounded.

"We thank God it is over," he said in his statement.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said the jailbreak attempt only showed the need for lawmakers to review the penal system.

"This indicates not only failure of intelligence but [also] failure of the structure itself," Drilon told reporters after witnessing Ms Arroyo's signing of the 2005 national budget in Malacañang.

CIA connections

Bayan Muna Rep. Joel Virador, vice chair of the House committee on Mindanao and Muslim affairs, said it would be "speculative at this point" to make conclusions on the reason behind the attempted jailbreak and hostage-taking.

"However, it is quite suspicious that the police and the military would specifically wipe out prominent Abu Sayyaf members," Virador said in a statement.

He said it was likely that other reasons, including the inhuman prison conditions, could have driven the prisoners to take matters into their own hands. But he raised suspicion about the killing of Ghalib Andang alias Commander Robot.

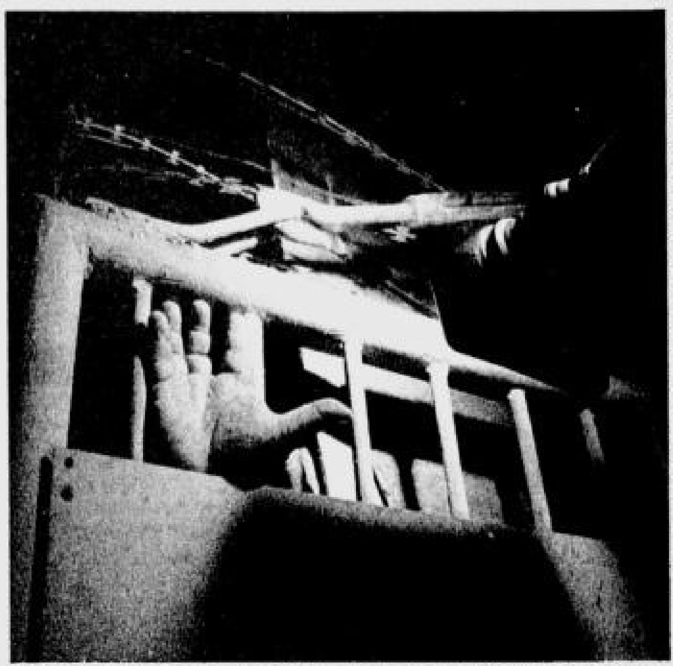
Virador said he visited Camp Bagong Diwa last November to join Moro detainees in celebrating the Eid'l Fitr, and was able to talk to Andang.

According to Virador, Andang disclosed that the so-called abduction of American Jeffrey Schilling was actually staged and that Schilling was an operative working for the Central Intelligence Agency to provide training to the Abu Sayyaf.

This disclosure boosted long-held allegations that the Abu Sayyaf was a creation of the CIA, Virador said.

Tortured?

He said that during his visit, he was also able to talk with other detainees, mostly from the Tausug clan in Sulu, and learned that many of them were tortured by the military into admitting the charges against them. *With reports from Margaux C. Ortiz in Manila; Romulo O. Ponte and Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*



DON'T: The media is barred from photographing the transfer of the bodies of the slain Abu Sayyaf prisoners from Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan, Taguig, for burial before sunset on Tuesday. REM ZAMORA

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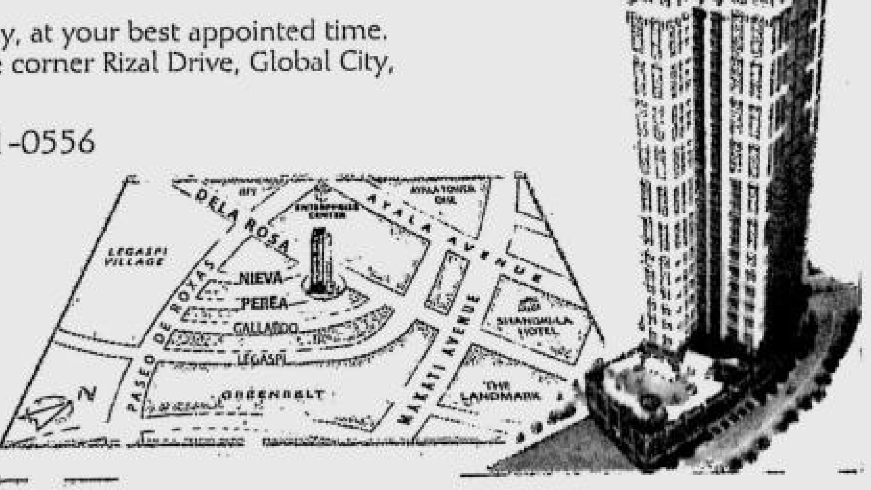

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Taiwan slams China's antisecession law

TAIPEI—China's new antisecession law heightens fears of war, Taiwan Premier Frank Hsieh said Tuesday as the United States and the European Union voiced concern over escalating tensions in the region.

"The peaceful status quo has been altered... the present situation arouses concerns for war," Hsieh told legislators.

He said Beijing had misjudged Taipei's determination to safeguard its democracy, as angry Taiwanese lawmakers decapitated paper effigies of Chinese President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao.

The Taipei government has demanded Beijing "sincerely apologize to the Taiwanese people for their grave mistake."

China's parliament passed the legislation Monday, giving the military the legal basis to attack Taiwan if it moves toward independence.

Undeterred, Beijing lashed out at the island for trying to "mislead," "hoodwink" and "distort" its citizens out of ulterior motives.

"It's a pure attempt to mislead and distort out of ulterior motives," an unnamed spokesperson of China's Taiwan Affairs Office was quoted as saying by state-controlled Xinhua news agency.

"The objective is to hoodwink the Taiwan compatriots and the world opinion, again stir up confrontation in the Taiwan Straits, and seek an excuse for the Taiwan independence forces to create trouble," he said.

With China bolstering its military capabilities and cross-Strait tensions growing, alarm bells have been ringing in the United States which warned the "unfortunate" law endangered regional peace and stability.

"We view the adoption of the anti-secession law as unfortunate. It does not serve the purpose of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait," White House spokesman Scott McClellan told reporters.

The issue is expected to be high on US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's agenda when she visits China on Sunday.

McClellan did not spell out a precise response from Washington and restated US support for the "one China" policy and said the United States "does not support Taiwan independence."

"We oppose any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo. We don't want to see a unilateral attempt that would increase tensions in the region. So this is not helpful," said the spokesperson.

The European Union, which is considering lifting an arms embargo imposed on China in 1989 after Beijing's bloody crushing of pro-democracy protests, urged both Beijing and Taipei to avoid inflaming tensions.

"The EU urges all sides to avoid any unilateral action that could stoke tensions," the EU said in a statement.

"The EU will be worried if this passage of a law referring to the use of 'non-peaceful means' negated recent signs of rapprochement between the two sides."

Traditional US allies Japan and Australia also voiced concern and called on the neighbors to desist from war, while countries close to China like Russia, Pakistan and Syria welcomed the developments.

Taiwan newspapers Tuesday called for self-restraint and dialogue while China's state-run press defended the law as a "work of reason."

In a commentary, Xinhua claimed the law was supported by all Chinese and Taiwanese except "the very tiny handful of 'Taiwan independence' secessionist forces."

"It is no surprise that they are terrified at it and do all they can to stigmatize it," the agency said.

The 10-article law calls for the use of "non-peaceful means and other necessary measures to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity," if all else fails.

This will be necessary "in the event that the 'Taiwan independence' secessionist forces should act under any name or by any means to cause the fact of Taiwan's secession from China," the law said. *AFP*

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30 people to attend Prince Charles' civil wedding

LONDON—Only 30 people will attend the civil wedding for Britain's Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles, but 700 will watch the blessing later in Windsor Castle, a source close to the royal family said.

Those attending the April 8 civil ceremony in Windsor Guildhall will include the children that the heir to the throne and Parker Bowles had from their previous marriages, the source said Monday.

"There will be 30 people present for that (civil ceremony)," in keeping with the couple's desire for a "low-key" affair, the source said on condition of anonymity.

PRINCE Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles AFP

The source denied a report in The Times newspaper that 200 would attend the civil ceremony.

No details have yet emerged for the guest list for the civil wedding, though Queen Elizabeth II and her husband Prince Philip have decided not to attend the civil ceremony to keep the event a low-key affair, the family has announced.

Royal experts said the queen, as head of the Church of England, believed that a civil wedding in an ordinary town hall diminished the monarchy as an institution.

However, the queen will be present for the service of prayer and dedication afterward at Saint George's chapel in Windsor Castle, which the source close to the royal family said will have 700 people attending.

Prince Charles had originally wanted to marry in Windsor Castle, but the marriage permit would have required opening up the castle to any members of the public who wanted to marry over the next three years.

No live television coverage is to be given of the civil ceremony, sources said. Media coverage has still to be decided for other events, however. *AFP*

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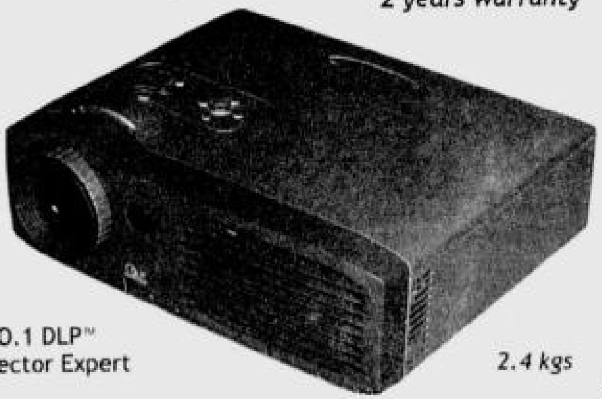

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Almost a million protesters demand Syria's pullout

BEIRUT—More than 800,000 people surged into central Beirut Monday to demand an end to Syria's near-three decade military domination of Lebanon, hurling a dramatic and potent challenge to the pro-Syrian Lebanese government.

Ahead of the largest demonstration in the country's history, thousands of Lebanese traveled from all over to Martyrs Square and the grave of former prime minister Rafiq Hariri, assassinated exactly one month ago in a bomb blast.

Beirut city official Mounib Nassereddine said Monday's gathering was "at least two and a half times" larger than last Tuesday's turnout called by pro-Syrian Lebanese parties, notably the Shiite Muslim movement Hezbollah.

Correspondents estimated the crowd last week at 400,000.

Martyrs Square, seen from above, was a vast expanse of red, the dominant color in the Lebanese flag, which demonstrators waved in brilliant sunshine as they sang and chanted slogans against Syria and the Lebanese leadership and called for Lebanon's "independence" from Damascus.

Some Lebanese television stations reckoned Monday's crowd at 1.5 million.

"We say with one voice: 'no' to the Syrian military and intelligence presence, 'yes' to liberty and independence," thundered leftist political figure Elias Attallah.

Lebanese MP Marwan Hamade, the official opening speaker, charged that Lebanese and Syrian intelligence services were hiding the truth behind the assassination.

"You want the truth on the assassination?" he asked.

"It's lying in the dark chambers of the (Syrian-Lebanese) intelligence services that are ruling us and that you are in the process of sweeping out."

"They killed (Hariri) because he was thwarting their plan to make Lebanon submit. They killed him because they are the enemies of democracy and Arabism," Hamade declared.

"Hezbollah organized a giant demonstration last Tuesday to intimidate us," said Nada, 35, as she traveled to Beirut from Zahle in the east.

"Today we're taking up the challenge and invite (Hezbollah) to join us because we represent the true majority of the country."

Added Anwar: "The Syrian people are our brothers. We have ties that go back centuries but the Syrian army and the mukhabarat (intelligence service) are no longer welcome in Lebanon."

Huguette Yamine, 57, said Monday's political demonstration was her first.

"I came with 10 family members. We walked here all the way from the other side of Beirut. We've had enough. I want my children to live in a free and democratic Lebanon."

Hariri's killing, widely blamed here on Syria, has energized an opposition movement aimed at forcing the withdrawal of all Syrian military and intelligence units from the country.

Syria has denied involvement and on Saturday Syrian President Bashar al-Assad gave a commitment to a UN envoy to carry out the pullback in accordance with a United Nations Security Council resolution.

Thousands of demonstrators turned out in Syria on Monday to show their support for Assad, the official Sana agency reported. *AFP*

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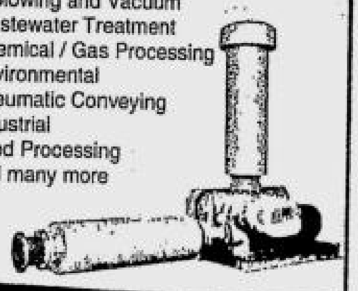
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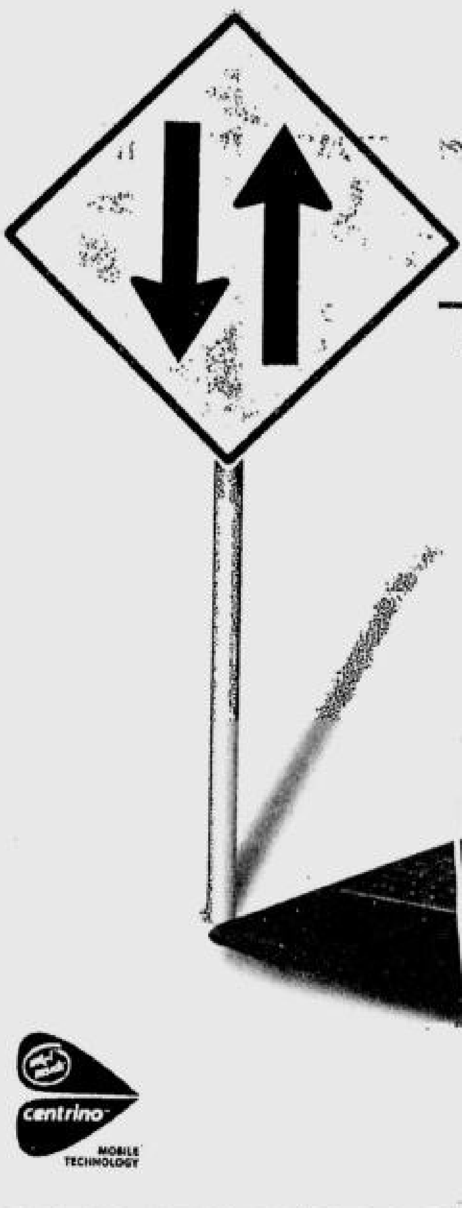
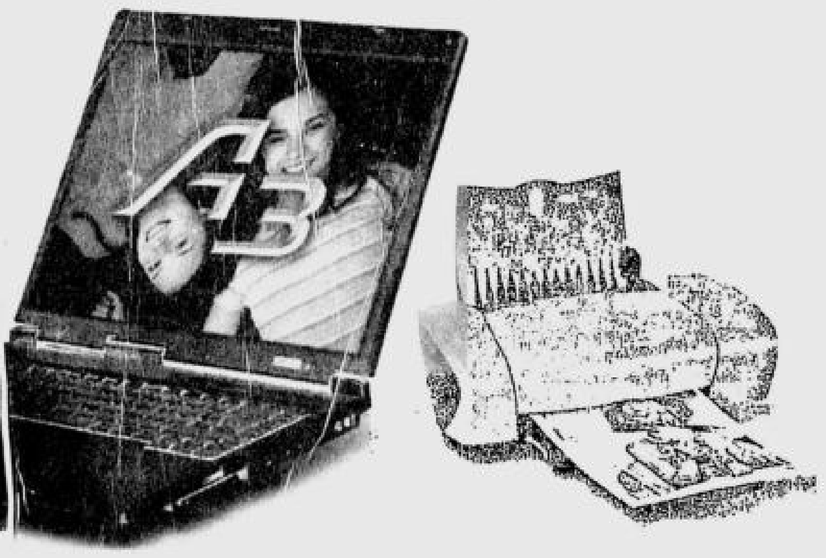
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IT'S A KITE!

A man flies a centipede-shaped kite in Wuhan, capital of central China's Hubei province. He spent half a year to make the 50-meter-long kite. AP

Iraqi Kurds, Shiites to form coalition gov't

BAGHDAD—Kurdish and Shiite leaders agreed to convene Iraq's new parliament on Wednesday even if they fail to iron out some wrinkles in their deal to form a coalition government.

Shiite officials said Monday that they also agreed to reach out to the country's Sunni Arab community to name the parliament speaker for the 275-member National Assembly that convenes.

On Tuesday, a suicide car bomb exploded in northeastern Baghdad, killing one child and wounding at least four people, including a police officer, police Col. Muhanad Sadoun said. The bomber was trying to hit a traffic police patrol, but crashed into a tree, Sadoun said.

Another car bomb targeting a US military convoy exploded on the main road to Baghdad's international airport in the west of the city, wounding two police who were guarding a nearby gas station, police Capt. Thamir Talib said.

Witnesses said US troops were also wounded in the blast. When US forces arrived on the scene to evacuate them, another car bomb exploded, wounding more troops who were loaded onto an arriving helicopter. One Humvee was destroyed and two civilian cars were in flames.

The US military could not immediately be reached for comment.

The Shiite clergy-backed United Iraqi Alliance and a Kurdish coalition, which won the two biggest blocks of seats in Jan. 30 elections, agreed last week to form a coalition government with Islamic Dawa party leader Ibrahim al-Jaafari as prime minister. In return, Jalal Talabani will become Iraq's first Kurdish president.

"We discussed the blueprint of the agreement reached Thursday. Some issues were revised and those revisions are still being discussed," alliance member Ali al-Dabagh said.

Al-Dabagh expressed optimism a final deal would be reached soon, but added that even without an agreement "the first session of the National Assembly will be held on Wednesday anyway."

Barham Saleh, a Kurd, indicated the two groups want to reach out to other factions to fill some Cabinet posts.

He said Shiite and Kurd negotiators planned to meet Tuesday with representatives from interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's Iraqi List, which placed a distant third in the parliamentary elections.

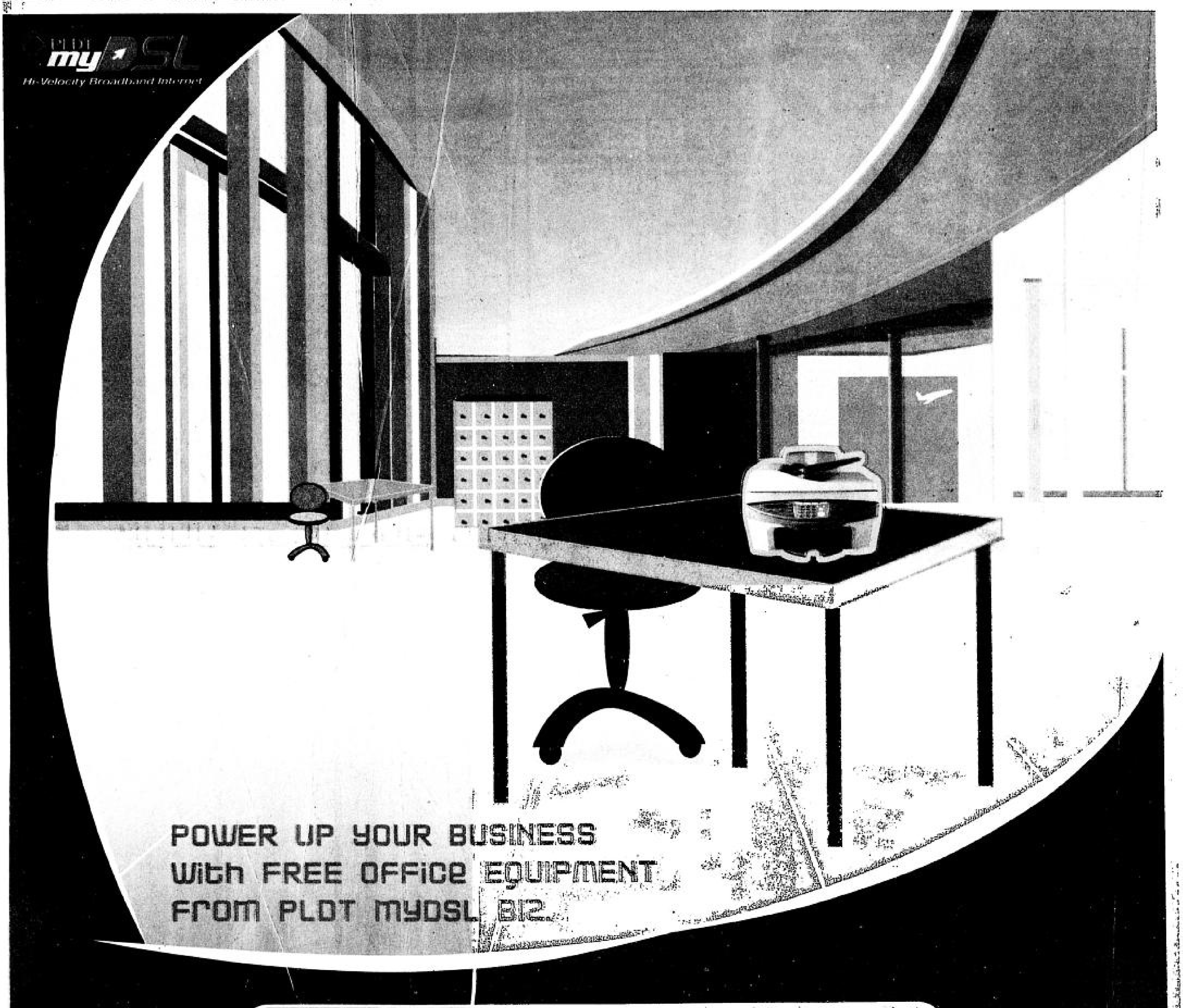
The interim government, meanwhile, announced that Iraqi security forces had captured two of ousted leader Saddam Hussein's relatives in his hometown of Tikrit and alleged they helped launch terrorist attacks in Iraq.

Its statement said one-time Saddam bodyguard Marwan Taher Abdul Rashid and Abdullah Maher Abdul Rashid were arrested last Tuesday. State-run Iraqiya television said the two men were cousins and Abdullah was a brother-in-law of Saddam's slain son Qusay.

Abdullah was strongly believed to have "used big amounts of money that he received from Qusay... to finance terrorism in Iraq," and Marwan "has been involved in a number of attacks against the security forces," the government statement said, giving no other details.

Neither man was listed on any of the American most-wanted lists.

Al-Dabagh declined to discusses details of the issues that had snagged the Shiite alliance's talks with the Kurds, but did say that the negotiators meeting at a home inside Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone talked about who should get the parliament speaker post. AP



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Judge bucks California ban on gay marriages

SAN FRANCISCO—In a landmark decision, a judge in the gay-friendly US city of San Francisco on Monday struck down as unconstitutional a California state law that bans same-sex marriage.

The ruling is the first on the constitutionality of the disputed law that led San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom to launch a rogue wave of gay marriages in which around 4,000 same-sex couples were wed last year.

Those unions were later nullified by the California Supreme Court, but the debate, which featured heavily in November's US presidential election, never went away.

Superior Court Judge Richard Kramer ruled that state laws limiting marriage to between a man and a woman violated the constitutional right to equality to which gay and lesbian citizens are entitled.

"This court concludes that California's traditional limit of marriage to a union between a man and a woman is not a sufficient rational basis to justify" banning same-sex marriage, Kramer wrote in the ruling, which gay-marriage opponents are expected to appeal.

"Simply put, same sex marriage cannot be prohibited solely because California has always done so before," the judge said ruling on the case brought by Newsom and 12-same sex couples. *AFP*

Nokor threatens to build more A-bombs

SEOUL—North Korea said Tuesday it would strengthen its atomic arsenal in an angry response to upcoming joint US-South Korean military exercises which the communist state denounced as nuclear war games.

The North justified its possession of nuclear weapons as establishing a balance of power to prevent a nuclear holocaust, ahead of the joint war games in South Korea starting Saturday.

"The exercises will be nuclear war exercises aimed to invade the North to all intents and purposes in view of their nature, scope and contents," a foreign ministry spokesperson told the official Korean Central News Agency.

"The DPRK (North Korea) will take necessary counter-measures including the bolstering of its nuclear arsenal to cope with the extremely hostile attempt of the US to bring down the system in the DPRK though it is the Korean people's own choice," he said.

"The reality testifies to the fact that the DPRK's nuclear weapons serve as powerful deterrent to keep the equilibrium of forces in the region, avert a new war and ensure peace."

The week-long military drills come amid diplomatic efforts to bring Pyongyang back into six-nation talks aimed at persuading it to give up its nuclear weapons program.

They coincide with the arrival here Saturday of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, on a three-nation North East Asia tour to discuss the nuclear standoff.

North Korea declared on Feb. 10 it had nuclear weapons and withdrew indefinitely from the disarmament talks due to "hostile" US policy.

The Stalinist state has since sent mixed signals on its willingness to return to the talks, with its leader Kim Jong-il saying Pyongyang would resume dialogue if "conditions" are met.

North Korean Premier Pak Pong-ju will visit China from March 22-27 to discuss the nuclear standoff, China's foreign ministry announced Tuesday.

Washington believes North Korea possesses one or two crude bombs and may have reprocessed enough plutonium from spent fuel rods at its Yongbyon nuclear complex for half a dozen more.

The two Koreas, the United States, China, Russia and Japan have met three times to try to resolve the nuclear standoff that erupted in 2002 when the United States accused the North of operating a secret uranium-enrichment program.

The talks made little progress, with the final round held in June 2004. North Korea boycotted a fourth round scheduled for September last year.

The North says the US-South Korean military drills are a rehearsal for a preemptive nuclear attack while officials in Seoul and Washington have said they are defense-oriented to cement the military alliance.

North Korea's state media said Sunday that the exercises could turn into "an actual war" and demanded they be called off.

A US naval battle group led by the USS Kitty Hawk aircraft carrier arrived on Monday in Busan, 450 km south of Seoul, to take part in the exercises.

The drills from March 19-25 involve mock battles aimed at evaluating command capabilities with US and South Korean troops mobilized for anticommando operations and computer war games.

Some 32,500 US troops are stationed in South Korea to help deter aggression from communist North Korea's 1.1-million-strong army, alongside about 650,000 South Korean troops. *AFP*

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OPINION

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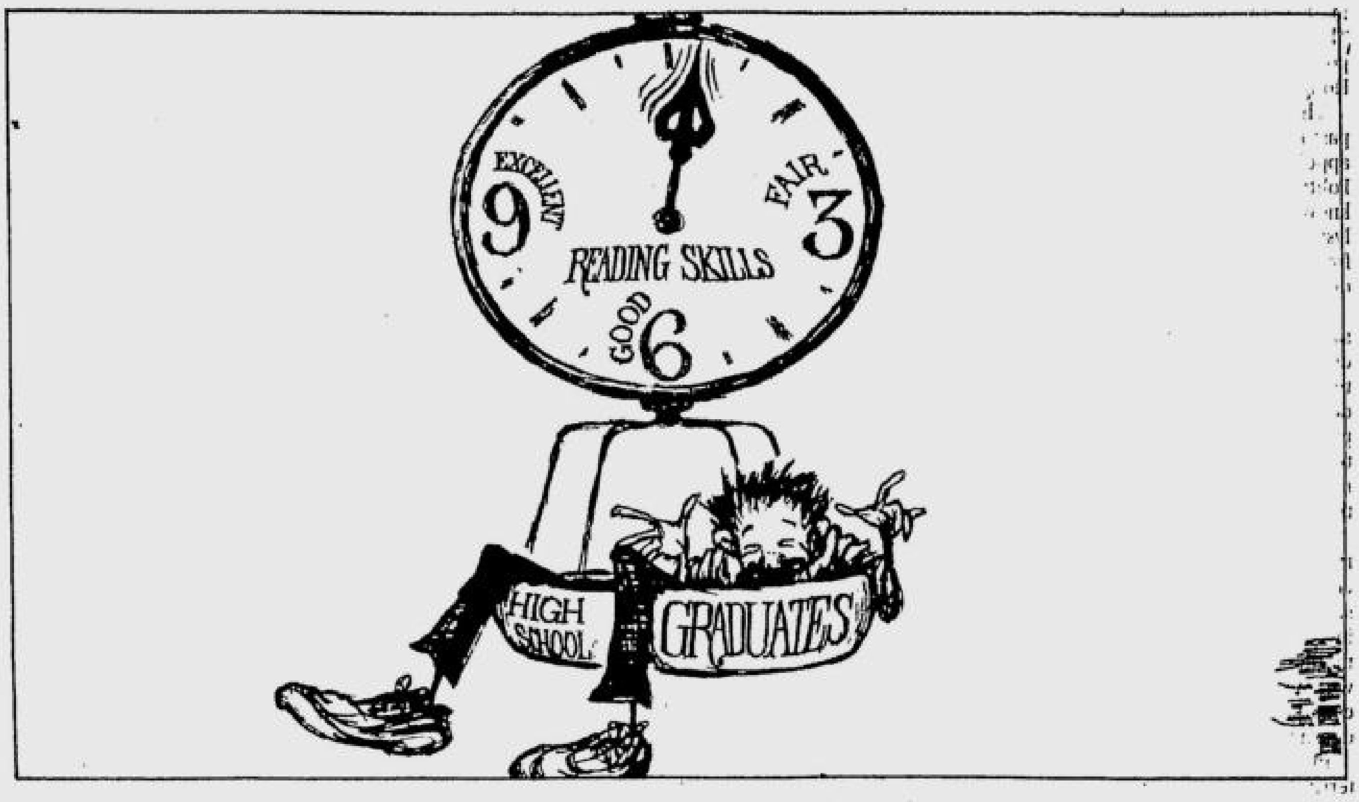

Incompetence

EDITORIAL

THE DEATHS of Ghalib Andang, alias "Commander Robot" and Alhamzar Limbong, alias "Kosovo," who were accused of leading several of the Abu Sayyaf's kidnapping operations and the bombing of the Superferry 14 in February 2004, along with 15 others, mean more than just another publicity black eye for the government. Their deaths at the hands of government agents sent in to put an end to a 24-hour failed escape attempt that turned into a prison revolt did not only raise the death toll from the first day's five deaths. Their deaths also mean that they have escaped trial and, more importantly, put any information that they possessed irretrievably beyond the government's reach.

The escape attempt itself speaks volumes of the continuing slapdash nature of the Philippine prison system and those who run it. Department of Justice prosecutors have told the media that prison officials had been tipped off as early as December that a jailbreak was in the offing. The reaction of Bureau of Jail Management and Penology officials was to shrug it off. And the shrugging continued when other things were pointed out, such as the dangers posed by having firearm-bearing guards in close proximity to the Abu Sayyaf prisoners.

Certainly political and public pressure for the government to fire officials will be intense—and justified. The whole episode was like a bad Hollywood movie, the kind that focuses on the spectacular incompetence of prison administrators.

Simply firing people, however, avoids tackling the real problem of our overcrowded, antiquated prison system. From unprofessional managers, to ill-trained prison guards, to inadequate funding, the jail system is simply overwhelmed by the vast number of prisoners being incarcerated in too few and too congested prisons. The result is both an unhealthy and nearly impossible-to-secure overpopulated system.

Human rights activists, for one, have been battling for years against overcrowding in our jails, which puts underage offenders in close proximity to hardened criminals, and which makes it even more difficult to properly isolate dangerous inmates such as captured members of the Abu Sayyaf. The price of poverty becomes even higher when everything, from allowing the use of cell phones, improperly supervised visits, and access to outsiders who can provide luxuries as well as potentially lethal contraband items such as guns, becomes available to inmates for a price or even a smile.

Unless and until the government comes up with a realistic policy with regard to the processing and handling of prisoners, yesterday's bloody end to a jailbreak will just be one more incident in a continuing series of similar—and more successful—attempts. The BJMP must contend with too many competing authorities (the police and military have their own prisons), an overwhelmed justice system (which crowds the jails with people vainly awaiting speedy trials), and a lack of facilities to properly contain especially dangerous prisoners.

We must add to this the continuing bad habit of our officials of trying to deflect attention from the scandal of the hour by pointing to perceived larger threats. Amid the standoff following the botched Abu Sayyaf escape attempt, unnamed "anti-terror officials" speculated that the whole matter might have been staged to deflect attention from plans by Jemaah Islamiyah to launch attacks during the Holy Week. This may or may not be so, but announcing it to the press at the time the standoff remained unresolved only served to deflect attention from the hard questions already being asked of the police and the BJMP.

The fact is that the Abu Sayyaf won yet another round against the government. Its captured members died with guns blazing, drawing the world's attention to their cause and their refusal to let their detention circumscribe their actions. The whole sorry episode suggests that its members can still effectively function right under the noses of government authorities. And this can only gladden the hearts of their allies in the field

Original sin on oil prices

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

FUEL prices are being raised by the oil companies every week, and this has a domino effect on the prices of everything else, since commerce and people depend on transportation to get from factories to consumers, and transportation, in turn, depends on oil to be able to move. Since Congress passed the Oil Deregulation Law that removed government control on the oil industry, prices have risen steadily without letup. It was like chaining the guard dogs and then opening the sheep pen's door to let the wolves in and attack the helpless sheep.

I think the Oil Deregulation Law and the Urban Land Reform Law are two of the most stupid laws ever passed by Congress. The motives behind them are commendable, but Congress failed to provide safeguards to prevent abuses, largely because it succumbed to lobbying by vested interests. These errors are now evident in the inexorable oil price increases and the increasing anarchy by squatters.

The motive of the Oil Deregulation Law is to encourage other oil players to compete with the three big oil companies already here—Petron, Shell and Caltex—so that competition and market forces will force prices down. But instead of prices going down, they went up. What went wrong?

Because of shortsightedness, lobbying and perhaps corruption, Congress left gaping loopholes in the law that allowed the oil cartel to continue dictating prices at will. Worse, it deprived government of any power to control prices.

First, no real competition materialized between the Big 3 and the new oil players. Many of the new players bought finished products from the Big 3 and resold them to the consumers. So how can they compete with the prices of the Big 3? On the contrary, they just followed the pricing of the cartel. In short, while there may be a hundred or so oil companies in the Philippines, it continued to be in the grip of the cartel.

What should have been done was to deregulate gradually to allow new players to become strong enough to really compete with the Big 3, during which time the government retained control of pricing to prevent opportunism. But the first thing our government did was to lift price controls, which was what the cartel wanted.

Other countries that deregulated their oil industries had long, open-ended and indefinite transition periods before full deregulation, during which time partial price controls remained. Only when there was real competition among the oil companies was full decontrol imposed.

If I'm not mistaken, South Korea has had oil deregulation for more than 10 years already, but it is still in partial decontrol mode, with price controls still in effect. Other Asian countries that also deregulated their oil industries followed the same procedure.

In contrast, our Congress provided for only a six- or three-month transition period. Worse, then President Fidel V. Ramos, shortened it to a farcical one month or so (if I remember right) when he signed the bill into law. In short, the original sins were committed by Congress and President Ramos, serpents in *barong* and suits, and our Paradise started its descent into Hell.

In sum, in spite of the Oil Deregulation Law, or because of it, we are still in the clutches of the oil cartel—in fact, two oil cartels, one composed of the oil producers, the Organization of Oil Exporting Countries, and the other composed of the refiners and producers of the finished products, the cartel in the downstream oil industry right here.

Our Constitution clearly says that it is the duty of the state to dismantle monopolies, cartels and restraints in trade. Based on this provision, then Rep. (now Bataan Gov.) Enrique Garcia filed a petition with the Supreme Court to declare the Oil Deregulation Law unconstitutional. The Court decided in his favor and the law was sent back to Congress and amended.

Garcia argued that the law was still unconstitutional because the transition period, which would make sure that the intent of deregulation would be fulfilled before full deregulation, was unrealistically short. The Court replied that that is "a judgment call" of Congress, but until know, 10 years later, it has not made a definite decision on the case brought to it by Garcia. While the Court tarries and delays justice, the people are suffering from the lack of wisdom of that law.

Before Garcia's term as congressman expired, he had filed a bill to repeal or amend the Oil Deregulation Law to make it conform to its original purpose, but Congress adjourned without acting on it, largely because, Garcia suspects, of the influence of the cartel. Athough he is no longer a congressman but a provincial governor, Garcia continues his fight against the oil cartel. His son replaced him as congressman, and Rep. Antonio Roman represents the other congressional district of Bataan. Together, they are continuing the fight in Congress. At the last Kapihan sa Manila on oil prices and the Oil Deregulation Law, Roman bewailed the lack of action of the present Congress and the slowness of the Supreme Court in deciding the case brought to it by Garcia, while the consuming public continues to suffer at the hands of the cartel.

What's taking the honorable justices so long? Do they need 10 years to decide what is right and what is wrong? In case of doubt, the tradition is to resolve it in favor of the people, not of big business. But has big business been able to reach the honorable justices of the Supreme Court, just like they have the members of Congress?

Deviant

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

THE FIVE anti-smut bills in the House have their counterparts in four anti-smut bills in the Senate. These are Sen. Sergio Osmeña's SB 480, Sen. Manuel Villar's SB 753, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada's SB 877, and Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr.'s SB 1186. They variously call for the prohibition of the publication, sale, distribution, demonstration, performance, exhibition of lewd, indecent and pornographic materials and acts.

I've said my piece on the dangers of these bills, posing as they do a threat to freedom of expression, freedom of the press and democracy in general. I need not repeat it. It needs only be said that its premise is prior restraint, a most frightening idea, putting as it does the burden of proof on creators to prove their creations are not smutty rather than on their detractors to prove they are. They invert the natural order of things in a democracy. Its equivalent is presuming a suspect guilty unless he can be proven innocent. That is an engraved invitation to tyranny.

I skimmed through the Senate bills, and when I got to the part about what constitutes pornography, I had the impression, as with the House bills, that their authors had much, well, fun "researching" it. Osmeña's bill has five whole sections on it. They include: "masturbation, oral and anal sex, autoeroticism, excretion such as urination and edema materials; sadomasochistic sex, bestiality, necrophilia, pedophilia, bondage and sex with sacrilege, sex acts between and among children"; "nudity of the human body and its various parts such as male and female genitals, pubic region, buttocks, female breast below a point immediately above the top of the areola, male genitals in a discernibly turgid state," etc. etc.

At least it has a nice turn of phrase, "male genitals in a discernibly turgid state." Though one must ask what a "discernibly turgid state" is. Is it a rod stuck out at a 45-degree angle, or more (super turgid?), or less (semi-turgid?)? I am reminded again of DiCaprio/Hughes in "The Aviator" demonstrating before the American Film Association Censorship Board with the aid of a mathematician that Jane Russell's breasts are no more prominent or shockingly exposed than those of other actresses that have appeared in movies the board approved. We are reduced to the same primitive state.

The others are more of the same. I was particularly amused by Jinggoy's bill, which has a special section on "sexually deviant acts," which includes: "1. buggery: sodomy, bestiality, pederastia, 2: algolagnia: sadism or active algolagnia, masochism or passive algolagnia, 3. necrophilism, 4. fellatio or irrumation, 5. cunnilingus, 6. anilungus, 7. urolagnia, 8. coprophilia, 9. masturbation. I really must borrow his XXX tapes! Or pirated XXX DVDS!

But you get an idea of where this is going when masturbation and oral sex get to be qualified as sexually deviant acts. And pity their spouses.

The reference to X material isn't completely a joke. That is where you will find most of these things. They are never, or almost never, depicted in movies for general distribution. The only aboveground movie where I've seen all of the above under Jinggoy's classification of "sexually deviant acts" is Nagisa Oshima's "In the Realm of the Senses." It was shown in the Manila International Film Festival way back in the early 1980s, which caused a stir not just because of its seemingly pornographic elements but because it ran counter to the sexual prudishness of the martial law regime (I tell you those things are allied, prudishness and tyranny)—and Imelda was the patron of the MIFF. I remember that the "FF" in "MIFF" took on new meanings. For those born yesterday, "FF" means "fighting fish," the old term for hardcore material.

"In the Realm of the Senses" is now considered a classic. The 4th Edition of Film Guide says: "The film celebrates their (a couple in pre-war militarist Japan) passion, steadfastly confronting even its most alarming implications. But it's also the most involving (and therefore disturbing) film about voyeurism since 'Rear Window.' As ever, Mishima broaches taboos not in a spirit of adolescent daring, but in the knowledge that the most deep-rooted taboos are personal, not social."

But otherwise, as I said, you will find the acts described by Jinggoy as deviant only in movies that are not shown in movie houses. Not even in the province, home to "insertions"—not unlike the "insertions" Malacañang and Congress like to make on the budget, which are more obscene. You will find them only in material that lies in the furtive corners of Quiapo, Greenhills, Marikina Riverside, and Makati Square. Normally with someone even more furtively proclaiming its existence and offering to lead you through a maze to a secret lair.

Which is where the authors of these bills probably got their, well, research materials. Which they have kept and added to a growing library, classified alphabetically or by porn star, in aid of legislation.

Frankly, I don't know why Congress is wasting our money on these things. "Bomba," "bold," "ST," "pene" movies or photos—call them what you will, they've been with us for a long time and will be with us for a long time. They have a way of surging and ebbing naturally like the tides. Not quite incidentally, I don't know where the legislators got this idea that the sight of "nude or scantily-dressed photographs of a woman or man," as Magsaysay's bill puts it, induces rape, as some of the bills suggest. I have yet to know of a scientific study that showed this. It's mere speculation. I can argue just as speculatively, though probably more convincingly, that masturbation lessens rape and other sex crimes.

I'd be more scared of those who don't. They are more likely to be, well, deviant.

A 'backward' country

COMMENTARY

Isabel T. Escoda

RECENTLY over Hong Kong's airwaves, someone called the Philippines "a backward country." The statement was no mere rant by some ignorant person. It came from a Hong Kong legislator during an interview over the territory's main radio station. This was during the heated discussions over reports about the impending political demise of Hong Kong's Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa.

The territory has been roiled by rumors this past month, ever since Beijing announced Tung's appointment as a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. The CPPCC is known as a "home" for retired officials, so analysts considered this a prelude to Tung's removal from his post even before he'd served out his second five-year term.

Hong Kong has an educated and politically savvy population which has, since the 1997 handover, been embroiled in debates about the fact that the people can't vote for their leaders. This, despite the fact that their Basic Law embodies the principles of "one country, two systems," in which the capitalist lifestyle and liberal system of governance established by the British will continue until 2047.

As a sop, China has granted Hong Kongers the right to vote for half of their legislative councilors, representing the territory's various constituencies. But China calls the shots when choosing the top leaders. This political control by the mother country worries and infuriates all those with democratic leanings who have no wish to be eventually smothered by a government that doesn't grant its people the basic freedoms.

In 1997 when Britain turned over to China the territory which was designated as a Special Administrative Region, Beijing chose Tung Chee-hwa as chief executive. A successful businessman, he was presumed to be able to run Hong Kong as competently as he had his corporations. But he's been constantly pilloried by his people and the media for his ineptitude and lack of political acumen. There are those (in the Beijing-leaning minority) who say he's a good man who has no choice but to kowtow to Beijing. But the majority have been unhappy about his lackluster performance and sycophantic stance vis-à-vis China.

The recent speculation about Tung centered on whether he'd been fired from his job or if his resignation was an admission of failure. Two years ago, half a million Hong Kongers flooded the streets protesting proposed legislation on internal security, and almost as many demonstrated last year when China reneged on its promise of universal suffrage. Many said Tung should have quit then and there. But he stayed on, being answerable only to Beijing, not to the people who didn't vote for him in the first place.

Such a situation is especially ironic when one considers that China supported the UN resolution calling for elections in Iraq, a country with no history of democracy. Hong Kongers are among the most literate and politically astute in Asia, and to consider them incapable of holding free elections truly rankles.

In that radio interview, the legislator who labeled the Philippines a backward country also lumped Thailand and Indonesia in the same category, but the interviewer corrected him by pointing out that those countries hold free elections. This did not faze the interviewee who compared Hong Kong—with its fine civil service (a legacy of British colonialism), and efficient legal and social systems—with its neighbors which wallow in bad governance, corruption and poverty.

His arrogant attitude reflected too many Hong Kongers' view of the Philippines as a skewed democracy and of its people as belonging mainly to a servant class.

During last year's Philippine presidential elections, one of Hong Kong's newspapers ran an editorial cartoon showing a Chinese couple with their child at the dinner table, served by a Filipina maid. The child asked, "Daddy, how come people in Angelita's country can vote for their president but Hong Kong people cannot?" The father looked nonplussed.

A recent survey by the Hong Kong-based Political & Economic Risk Consultancy shows the Philippines ranking second to Indonesia on the list of most corrupt Asian nations. It's yet another black mark for Filipinos, which gives relevance to scholar E.J. San Juan's recent paper, "Remapping the Filipino Diaspora in the Age of Globalization." In it he harps on his favorite theme about continuing Western colonialism that produces the diaspora which turns developing countries into exporters of bodies. He cites the figure of eight million Filipino migrants "scattered to the four corners of the earth and subjugated to the position of selling their selfhoods." A diaspora reflects a nation's poverty, hence the negative image seen by outsiders.

Whoever Beijing anoints to lead Hong Kong, the territory will continue to flourish economically—even as its democrats will keep protesting China's political stranglehold. Still, this enclave remains a commercial powerhouse which will go on using those bodies from its impoverished neighbors, a practice San Juan has long railed against. The sad fact remains that, short of a revolution to pull the country out of its quagmire, shedding the label of "backward" may be one of those near-impossible goals which will continue to elude the Philippines.

Isabel T. Escoda's upcoming book, "Pinoy Abroad," follows her two earlier books, "Letters from Hong Kong" and "Hong Kong Postscript."

Young voices touching lives

COMMENTARY

Lourdes Didith V. Mendoza,
Institute on Church and Social Issues

> Unlike many of us who do a lot of talking, these kids have learned to back up all their talk with concrete actions that benefit not only themselves

IT has often been said that not all that is loud deserves to be given attention. In our society's case, this holds true since the loudest voices from among us usually come from the powerful, and their voices have been given much air space for too long. Ironically, the poor, who are often described as loud, are really never heard in the public arena.

The idea of the loudest call falling on deaf ears kept coming to my mind as we mingled with a group of kids from one of the poorest neighborhoods in Quezon City earlier this year. Before we joined their group, the kids were very rowdy, each child telling his own story at the same time, each story made livelier by gestures. But as we slowly inched our way closer to them, the noises coming from the children dwindled down, until all noise came to a deafening halt. The liveliness was replaced by an unexpected quiet.

In a study we did late last year on the situation of the urban poor youth in Quezon City, one of the glaring findings we had was that the youth, especially in urban slums, have no voice in society at all. The young people who participated in that study, along with some of the adults who play important roles in their lives, said that the youth are merely treated as children, with nothing to offer to their communities, or to society in general.

Ironically, these young people are already working for their families and earning their own keep, and sometimes get hell from their parents if they can't contribute to what little the family earns each day. They are also the same young people who go to school a mere three times a week because of lack of school space, to listen to what their teachers have to say.

This lack of encouragement from their immediate surroundings may have contributed to one of the other findings of the study: that the youth in urban slums lack the confidence to participate in the development of their communities. Their immediate surroundings have not given the youth a chance to participate in ways that really matter to them, and when they do get the chance, they are not encouraged by their parents, or by their community.

For some young people, this is a dead end. What now? If right within their homes they are not given a voice, where then can they go to be heard?

One striking discovery we found in the most inaccessible area of one urban slum in Quezon City was a group of young students who come together every Wednesday night for Bible study and sharing. This small group is actually an offspring of a bigger group of adults who come together once a week for their own Bible sharing. The adults who make up this group have children who were always tagging along with them, so to hush the kids up, they asked them to form a Bible study group of their own, and so they did.

The funny thing here is that the kids who were hushed up by their parents do not content themselves with just sharing insights from the Bible passages they read. They want to do something. Since they live in an urban slum where trash lay at just about every corner, they decided to clean up their community at least once a week. They placed receptacles at the end of every pathway so that collecting garbage would be easier. Once a week, they clean out these receptacles and place them in a bigger junkyard where the trash can be sorted.

The project excited the group so much that the members are inviting all the residents of the community to help out. They made flyers and posters that they posted on the bulletin boards of their chapel. They told their parents about their project, and soon after, their parents were helping them out. Now, it's the parents' turn to tag along as the kids go about their many activities.

The young people who are part of this little clean-up drive have become livelier as they busy themselves with doing something for their community. But as they implement this little project, they still go off to school to study, and continue with their Bible sharing every Wednesday night.

Their voices, at first hushed up by their immediate surroundings, now reverberate through the alleys and pathways of their small slum community. And theirs are the voices that parents have learned to listen to, and slowly, the other members of the community as well.

Maybe it's because unlike many of us who do a lot of talking, these kids have learned to back up all their talk with concrete actions that benefit not only themselves, but other people as well. Their voices resound more distinctly against all the clanging noises heard in an urban slum. Their voices have become not mere vibration in space, but like hands touching lives as they gaily move along their own simple and often ignored lives.

Symbols

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

COMMENTING on the attention to detail in my work, someone once said that I would have been better off as an anthropologist rather than a historian. Observing people is one of my joys, and one of the things I try to impart to my students. We often go through life seeing a multitude of things but we rarely take the time to stop and really notice.

I asked my students recently how a blind person would distinguish between the current P5 and P10 coins. Eyesight made the students remark that it was the gold inner part of the coin that made one different from the other. Our coinage is actually blind-friendly because you can tell by size, weight and shape (and even a hole) the different denominations, but the P5 and P10 peso coins are of a similar size and weight.

I asked my students to close their eyes and try and figure out what the difference was and was amused by their answers. One person said that if you drop the coins, the sounds are different. Another said that if you run your fingers over the coin, the same way a mahjong player feels the surface ("*salat*") of a mahjong tile, you could sense that the P10 coin feels different. Another student said that all a blind person has to do is use the unidentified coin to pay for something worth P7. If he gets change, then he must have handed over a P10 coin, and if the seller asks for P2 more, then he has P5.

Actually, you can tell by feeling the rim of the coins. The rim of the P5 coin is smooth, while that of P10 is ribbed. We handle these coins daily and yet we do not notice the text or pictures on them. We see the coins but do not note their differences. There is something about disability that strengthens the rest of the working senses.

The same can also be said about symbols. One of my friends who regularly passes through Lito Atienza's Baywalk noticed the street sign saying "Ped Xing" and asked me for its historical significance. Frankly, I was tempted to create a whole story about a Chinese adventurer in 1360 who married a pre-colonial princess in Malate and sired many children, one of whom produced many offspring from whom Jose Rizal could trace his ancestry. Of course, I come from the illegitimate line of the family. But I told her the sign was simply a short form for "Pedestrian Crossing." One can only wonder how many people want to know who "Ped Xing" is, but are afraid to ask. How many people pass through this sign daily but never notice?

The Philippine flag is one of the symbols we encounter daily, but we never stop to ask ourselves what the symbols mean and whether the symbolism taught to us in school conforms to the historical documentation. For example, one of the questions I usually ask my students is to give me the symbolism of the sun. Very few people can enumerate the eight provinces that are immortalized in the eight rays of the sun. Worse, when I ask that they pinpoint these provinces on the map, very few know that all eight are Luzon provinces. When you continue the interrogation and ask why these provinces were chosen, the standard reply is that these were "the first eight provinces that revolted against Spain." Historically, these were the first eight provinces placed under martial law by the Spaniards at the outbreak of the Philippine Revolution.

We all know that our flag is unique in that it flies with the blue field up in times of peace and the red field up in times of war. But, what about the colors? Do they mean anything else? Doesn't the declaration of independence read in Kawit on June 12, 1898 state that the red, white and blue in our flag is based on the red, white and blue of the US flag?

Mariano Ponce in 1899 sent a Philippine flag to a friend with a letter explaining the symbols as follows:

"…[T]he blue, color of the sky, means our hope in a future prosperity, through progress; the red means the blood with which we bought our independence; the white represents peace which we wish for ours and foreign countries. The sun represents the progress, and sometimes means that the Philippine nation belongs to the Oriental family, like Japan, Korea, etc., who bear also one sun in their flags. The three stars are the three great groups of islands composing the Archipelago, the Luzon group, the Bisayas group, and the Mindanao group."

Emilio Aguinaldo and other patriots have their own take on the flag and to enumerate them here will cause more confusion. You can choose from a number of texts to make a certain point.

Of late, there have been moves to redesign the flag and make it more sensitive to present sociopolitical life. There have been proposals for a ninth-ray in the sun or a crescent moon to make the flag inclusive of Mindanao, which is already represented by a star. One of Aguinaldo's speeches explained the rays of the sun saying it:

"…[S]tirred up Filipinos and spread the light over their world…it is now the light which brightens every spot in the Philippine islands, and under its influence the Itas, Igorots, Manguians and Moros, all of whom I believe were made in the image of God, and whom I recognize as our bretheren, now come down from the mountains to join with us."

Symbols are open to numerous interpretations, and in the case of the flag, it can be used to unite or divide. The choice is ours, which reading do we take?

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Children in harm's way

THE DEPARTMENT of Health says it was pesticide contamination of cassava snacks sold to students in Mabini, Bohol. The National Bureau of Investigation disagrees (as usual), saying it was cyanide from cassava flour. Whatever the cause, with 28 children dead and more than 70 others hospitalized, the food poisoning raises a host of questions related to the safety and health of our children, whether in rural or urban areas.

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

Three issues came to my mind as I followed the Bohol tragedy: (a) food safety in schools; (b) the pesticides problem; and (c) basic survival skills for the Filipino.

Food safety

I am certain there are daily outbreaks of food poisoning among our students, mostly going undetected. These are usually mild diarrhea cases from unsanitary food handling, but occasionally you'll have more serious cases which are picked up by the papers, such as this recent case in Bohol.

Our students get their food either from canteens on campus or from the numerous food vendors and establishments around schools. The registered businesses are a bit safer because they have to be inspected. But I say only "a bit" more safe. Inspections by government regulatory agencies are rare, and center on basic sanitation, such as employees being told to use hairnets or to wash their hands before and after using the toilet. After the inspection, it's often back to old dirty routines.

If basic sanitary measures are not observed, I'd worry even more about other food safety issues. It's hard to say if even owners of larger restaurants or canteens are aware of how long foods can be kept safely—eggs for example are notorious for breeding salmonella bacteria, even in the refrigerator.

Then we get to the food vendors, who are completely unregulated. To some extent they may actually be safer because they only prepare small amounts of food, which are usually sold out or consumed the same day as they are prepared. But we also see the potential for mass poisoning, as in the cassava cakes sold in Bohol.

Should we now require all food vendors to register themselves? That would only drive up prices of their food products, often the only affordable items for poorer students.

We'd probably get more results if the Department of Education and the DOH could just join forces and conduct workshops for anyone involved in food for students—from administrators to food handlers to the vendors themselves, instructing them not just on hand washing but on safety around cooking and storage.

And while they're at it, they should be giving basic nutrition education as well. Our canteens, restaurants and ambulant food vendors—even in, or should I say especially in the most exclusive of schools—tend to sell foods with dubious nutritional quality, from instant noodles to soft drinks. In a way we're seeing a kind of creeping poisoning here, a warping of Filipino food habits happening, ironically, in our educational establishments.

Pesticides

I can believe DOH officials when they say it was pesticides that killed the children in Bohol. They found pesticides in one of the vendors' homes and theorize that there may have been contamination as she prepared the cassava cakes. Another theory here is that the schoolchildren were already being exposed to pesticides used in the fields and that the cassava, no matter how small the amounts of contaminating chemicals, had enough of a "trigger dose" to cause serious, if not fatal, poisoning.

I hope the DOH follows up on these leads to trace the trail of poison, and use this to warn a complacent public about this ongoing ecological disaster, so terribly lethal because it is so quiet. The pesticides, easily absorbed through the skin, are all around us now, finding their way into the blood of our schoolchildren and into the breast milk of mothers.

Environmental activists have been warning about pesticides for years, including the way Filipinos have become so cavalier about these poisons. Filipinos, especially farmers, often refer to pesticides as "*gamot*" (medicine) so it shouldn't be surprising they're now kept inside the home, sometimes even in the kitchen next to food items (one time I even saw a pesticide stored next to a can of infant formula).

We associate pesticides with rural areas, but the insecticides in urban homes utilize the same powerful chemicals for an arsenal of products to deal with creatures that fly, crawl or creep: mosquitoes, ants, cockroaches, fleas.

Check how you store and use these chemicals. Do you keep them next to food? Are the insecticides within the reach of children? Do you ask your children to do the spraying? Do you spray the rooms where infants and toddlers sleep and play? Do you forget to wash your hands after using these chemicals? If you answered yes to all those, you're taking the risks of these insecticides too lightly, especially in relation to children.

We need to educate both children and adults, about these pesticides. And it's time we moved away from calling pesticides "*gamot*" and use "*lason*" (poison) instead, with stricter regulations on warning on the labels about storage and use.

Survival 101

When you think about it, what we need are basic Survival 101 skills for a transition society. On one hand, we now live with the risks coming with modernity's many convenience products, from junk foods to insecticides and pesticides. On the other hand, we're rapidly losing traditional knowledge and skills from the past that could be useful for survival, including how to deal with some of modernity's problems.

In the context of many rural areas, there's the need to be able to distinguish wild and domesticated cassava, the wild ones having much higher levels of cyanide. Traditionally, even wild cassava was used for food but people knew how to process the root crops to remove the precursors of cyanide. We've apparently lost that skill, resulting in periodic poisoning outbreaks when people consume the wild cassava.

The Bohol poisoning reminds us it's not just knowledge about cassava that we need to revive. We need to reexamine many of our traditions around food, promoting the healthier aspects so we can wean ourselves away from instant noodles and junk foods. I've written, in an earlier column, about the possibilities of giving income-generating loans to food vendors on condition that they prepare nutritious foods. There's a whole array of traditional nutritious snack items, including cassava cakes, that can be encouraged.

Similarly, as we look into the angle of pesticide poisoning, we should be looking for safer alternatives, including traditional plant-based and non-chemical methods for controlling insects.

All this information and skills should be taught in our schools, making sure that the next generation of Filipino parents can better protect themselves, and their children.

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'Tree of the future'

I DRIVE a 1999 2.8-liter diesel-fed SUV. A lawyer-friend introduced me to the coconut methyl ester aka coco-diesel or bio-diesel. Since that day, I have been hooked on coco-diesel. Here's why:

1. The morning "cold-start syndrome" of my SUV has been eliminated. It is now a one-click start-up SUV.

2. The combustion improved and my vehicle now runs smoother and faster ("*matining at madulas*," in the words of my driver) as if it were on gasoline.

3. The engine noise is diminished and the engine no longer sounds "forced" even during an uphill drive.

4. The smoke emission during a run has been eliminated and substantially reduced during morning start-ups. I don't need to have the SUV's exhaust pipe regularly flushed of its carbon deposits.

I believe that the coco-diesel is the next big thing that happened to the coconut industry after (or even before?) the coconut virgin oil. It could be a potential export commodity and our country's significant contribution to the worldwide effort to minimize global warming. Large industries that depend on diesel for their fuel requirements would benefit a lot from coco diesel especially in terms of environmental impact. It will surely work in smoke-belching jeepneys, buses and trucks as well as in a Pajero, Land Cruiser or Trooper. Indeed, the coconut is not just the tree of life. It is the tree of the future.

I occasionally travel the Bicol-Manila route and I am very satisfied with what the coco diesel has done to my vehicle. I use two liters of bio-diesel as additive or booster to a full tank. In Legazpi City, interested parties can find it in a car wash, just across the GSIS office, along Alternate Road. It is just disheartening that you cannot find it in any gasoline station.

—FRANK E. LOBRIGO,
One Doña J. Guevara St.,
Cabagñan West, Legazpi City

LETTERS

Will HB 3773 work in reducing abortion?

LAWMAKERS say that when the Catholic Church opposes the Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Act of 2005 (HB 3773), it is abetting abortion. According to them, by providing basic reproductive health needs, HB 3773 will actually prevent more than 1,000 abortions a day which are caused by unwanted pregnancies.

I only have one question to ask. In the United States, where reproductive health needs are sufficiently attended by the government, why is it that the killing of unborn babies in so-called legal abortions continue at such high rates?

—GIGI PADILLA,
9 Apo St., Quezon City

Poor quality of TV shows

THANKS to Bayani San Diego Jr. for his article, "Presence of malice," in which he expressed concern over dirty TV shows that get "good ratings" by discussing scandals, miseries and immoral acts involving celebrities. (PDI, 2/17, 18/05) It's sickening to watch on these TV shows women crying—their faces distorted—and revealing their misfortunes with their "partners." Shows like these tend to condition young people into thinking that infidelities and immoralities are trivial.

Another trend on TV that should be controlled is the *malandi* way gays on TV talk, laugh and shout. They can be on TV because they are good artists but they should not make the show "dirty."

The world which watches our shows may think that Filipinos have low moral values and that many of our males are gays *na malandi*. With an image like this, how do we expect to be respected?

I hope something will be done by the TV producers to elevate the quality of our TV shows.

—ABSALON V. GUIANG,
290 Cuenca St.,
AAV, Muntinlupa City

A Church-dominated gov't

IT is obvious that Catholic Spaniards are using artificial contraceptives. It would be wrong to say otherwise as Spain's population is only at 41 million even after all these years.

On the other hand, there are now 84 million Filipinos and there will be 100 million of them in less than 10 years from now. The Church tells us it is a sin to use contraceptives.

Oddly enough, we have not heard that Spaniards envy us. Our population problem, one of the world's fastest growth rate, cannot be solved, simply because we have a Church-dominated government, and for which a horrible catastrophe awaits the next generation.

—VICTOR MURILLO,
658 Maharlika St.,
Plainview 1550, Mandaluyong City

The 'Austrian'

WE have been avid readers of the INQUIRER even before our granddaughter Dianne became an employee of the newspaper. Reading your article on Ernest Korneld clarified to me his nationality. I had always thought he was an Austrian with his heavy accented English.

He was a regular customer of Décor Lampshade shop in Harrison Street, Pasay, owned by his friend Mrs. Rothkirch, where I worked with my mother as lampshade makers. That was in 1947. Big and stocky, with his curly, silvery hair, he always wore off-white short-sleeved polo shirts and dark pants. I was a little bit afraid when I first took Mr. Korneld's orders, but learned later that he was kind and friendly.

When Mrs. Rothkirch decided to close Décor, for she had to move to San Pablo, Laguna to join her husband, who was the manager for Peter Paul (desiccated coconut), Mr. Korneld offered me to join his staff, where I would be the only girl, as he told me. My mother objected to this, so we instead opened our own shop in Mabini Street, Ermita in 1948, and he patronized our Roced (Décor spelled backwards) Shop, where he addressed my mom, "Mrs. Roced."

He had many projects, designing houses and doing interior designing exclusively for Ayala and San Lorenzo Villages, according to his driver, whom he always sent when his lampshade orders were ready for pick-up.

I lost track of him when I got married in 1952 and left our shop to raise a family. Later, I learned from my sister that Mr. Korneld died, leaving quite a large sum of money to his loyal employees, which made her say, "*Sayang, napamanahan ka rin sana!*"

—JULIETA BARROS VILLAFUERTE,
3845 Pinos St.,
Pinagkaisahan, Makati City

Not in February

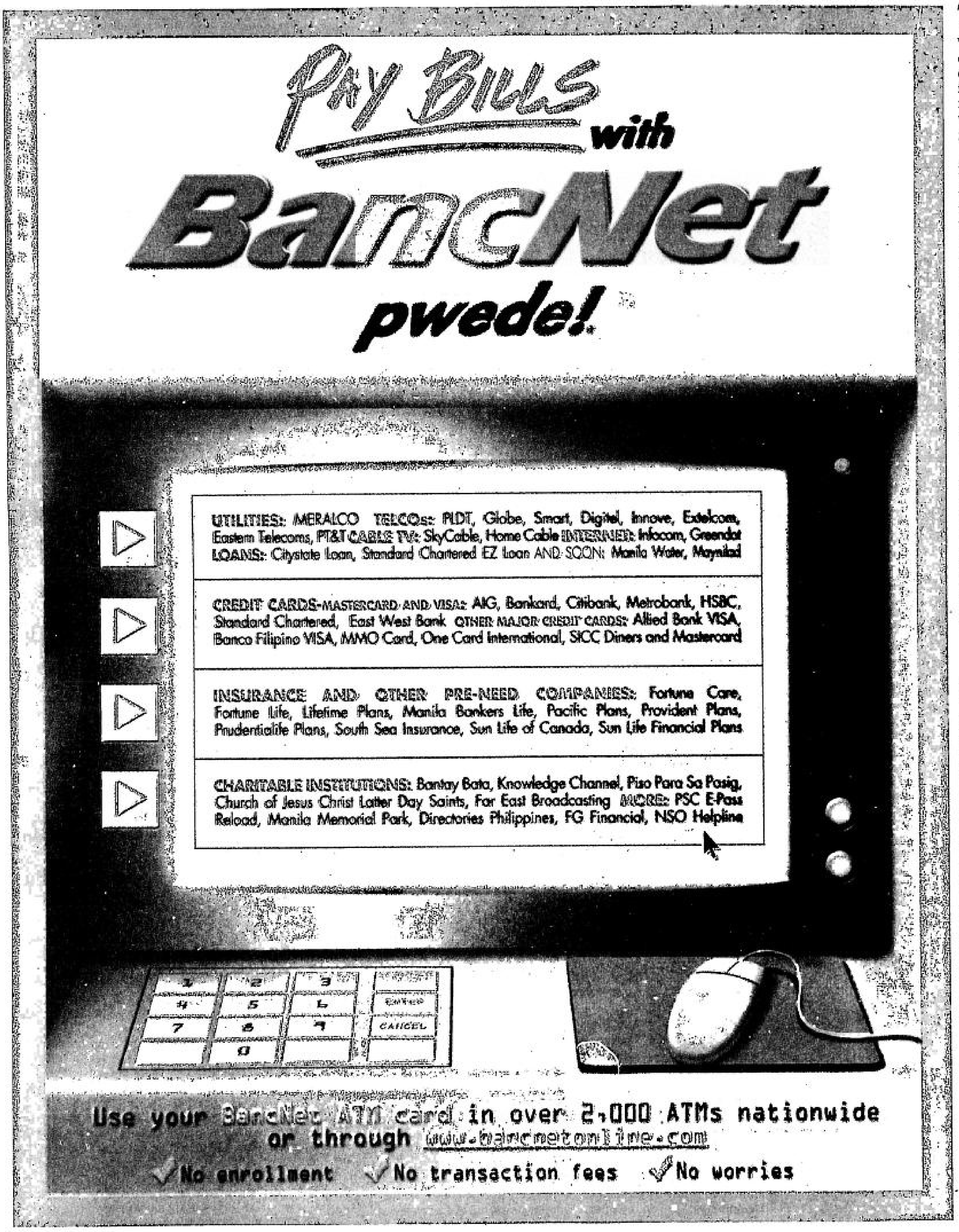
IN THE MARCH 7 column of Raul Palabrica, he cited a reader who felt the incongruity of celebrating the Philippine-Japan Festival in the same month we commemorate and mourn the massacre and rape of 100,000 innocent civilians by Japanese soldiers in 1945.

While he rightly said that we should not allow the past to "burden us down" when facing the future, still we cannot allow the landmark events in our past to be so casually consigned to oblivion.

Gemma Cruz Araneta, in her Manila Bulletin column of Feb. 22, and Fr. Miguel Bernad, SJ in his Philippine Star column of March 7, both raised the concern that the choice of February as the Philippine-Japan Festival month is a "deliberate and malicious" effort by the Japanese government to "gloss over, if not totally obliterate, all reference to what went on during the Second World War." Indeed, we are of the same view that "February is sacred and should not be defiled for any reason."

Our newspapers should not adopt a merely passive attitude on the issue and allow themselves to be manipulated by the Japanese. They should actively advocate the holding of the Philippine-Japan Festival in another month, perhaps, July when we signed the treaty of peace.

—BENITO LEGARDA JR.,
7 Polk St., Greenhills,
San Juan, Metro Manila



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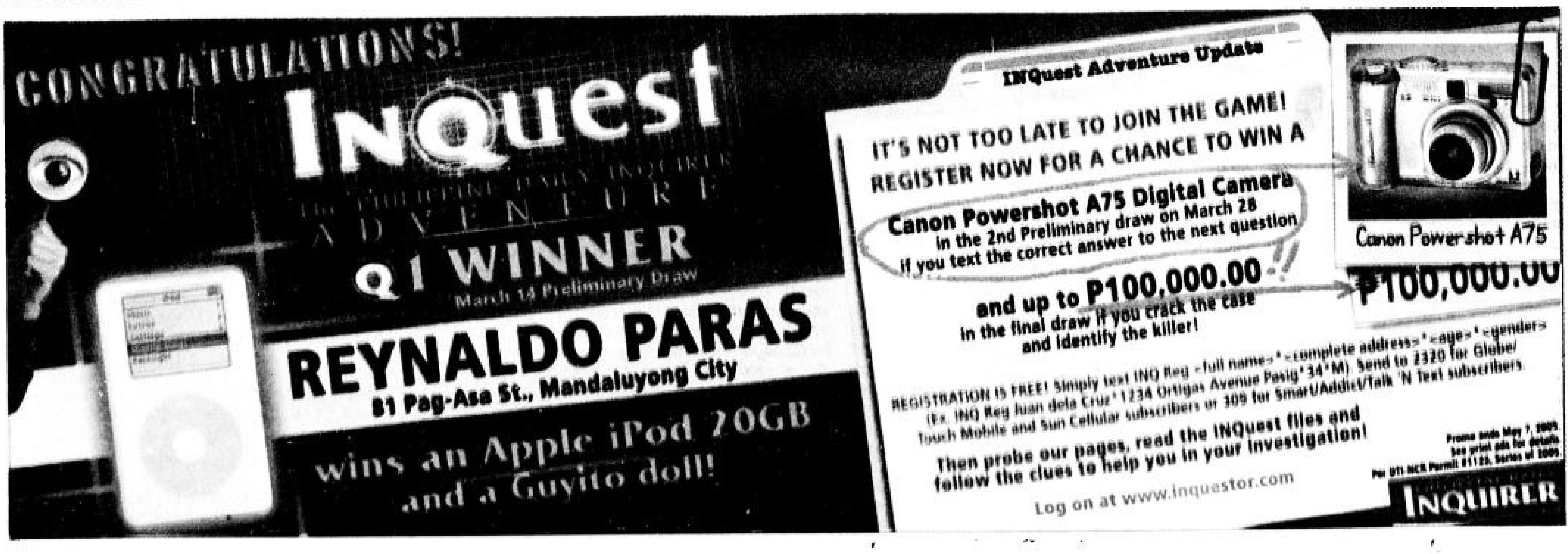

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Another Bayan Muna leader killed

WELCOMING COMMITTEE AFP

A Muslim student of the Manicahan National High School displays replicas of American flags in Zamboanga City to welcome Portia McCollum, deputy director of the US State Department, who visited the city recently.

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—Lawyer Felidito Dacut, Bayan Muna regional coordinator, did not finish his meeting with members of the militant group on Monday night because he had to buy milk for his 2-year-old daughter.

But Dacut, 51, was not able to purchase the milk. He was shot dead on board a passenger jeepney along Arellano Street here, about a kilometer where the meeting was held.

His wife, Amelia, was devastated when told by a nephew about the killing of her husband.

"We are seeking justice for the brutal killing of my husband who was a good man, a good husband and father to our daughter," said Amelia, 47, and a nurse of Basey, Samar.

The Bayan Muna condemned the killing and pointed to the military as the possible culprit.

Nelson Nirza, Bayan Muna Eastern Visayas information officer, said they believed that Dacut's killing could be part of the "clearing operation" by the military against their group.

"There could be no other reason for his (Dacut) killing. He was a top official of the Bayan Muna in the region and our group was being identified by the military (as a front) of the insurgency movement (New People's Army)," he told the INQUIRER.

Major Gen. Jovito Palparan, 8th Infantry Division commander, denied the allegation and assured that he would participate and assist in the investigation of the case.

"I was not even aware that such an incident took place. I was pre-occupied monitoring the incident in Bicutan," he said, referring to the hostage drama instigated by members of the terrorist group Abu Sayyaf inside the Camp Bagong Diwa.

Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño asked the police to solve the killing and for Palparan to stop any harassment directed at his group.

"I call on Major General Palparan to issue a public statement regarding the assassination of Attorney Dacut and for him to order his soldiers in the field to stop destroying Bayan Muna which is a legitimate political group," Casiño said over Radyo Diwa dyDW.

Casiño and fellow Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo authored a resolution urging an investigation of the killing of leftist activists.

"At the rate things are going, our party will have been wiped out by the next elections," Casiño said.

Casiño challenged members of Congress to talk to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the police in their respective districts and urge them to treat the party different and apart from armed revolutionary groups.

Nirza said Dacut was presiding over a meeting at their office in Old Road Sagkahan when at about 6:30 p.m., the lawyer asked to be excused because he had to buy milk for his daughter.

Dacut and a companion, identified only as Felix, boarded a jeepney. As the vehicle was cruising along Arellano Street at about 6:45 p.m., a motorcycle, with two men on board, drove near the victim.

One of the suspects shot Dacut at the back.

The victim was brought to the nearby Bethany Hospital but doctors declared him dead on arrival. The single bullet pierced Dacut's heart.

Amelia, 47, said her husband had been receiving death threats in his mobile phone but chose to ignore them. "He had no personal enemy. He immediately gave help to those who asked," she said, sobbing.

Senior Insp. Felix Dacut, a younger brother who works at the Police Regional Headquarters in Palo town in Leyte, also expressed the family's wish for justice.

His remains lie at the Metro Park Funeral Chapel in Sagkahan district. *With a report from Michael Ubac in Manila*

Top CPP leader in W. Mindanao captured

By Julie S. Alipala
PDI Mindanao Bureau

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A ranking leader of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in Western Mindanao was captured in Misamis Occidental on Tuesday last week, the military said yesterday.

Angelina Belonia, alias Medz, Angie and Edna, was presented to media yesterday.

Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza said Besonia acted as deputy secretary for the Western Mindanao Regional Party Committee.

"Besonia is the second highest communist leader of the Western Mindanao Regional Party Committee that covers three provinces in Western Mindanao and Misamis Occidental," Braganza said.

Besonia, 61, looked fragile and sat in a wheelchair during the presentation.

Col. Domingo Tutaan said Besonia was not maltreated and remains in a "very healthy" condition.

"Except that her blood pressure rose to 130 over 90," Tutaan said.

She avoided cameras and covered her face with a handkerchief during the presentation.

"She is a hard core leader and her arrest is a big blow to the communist movement in Mindanao," Braganza said.

DPWH under pressure to pursue flyover

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

FORT DEL PILAR, Baguio City—Unidentified politicians and businessmen have started pressuring the Department of Public Works and Highways to proceed with a controversial Baguio flyover project after President Macapagal-Arroyo disowned it as one of her government's priorities on Saturday.

Manuel Alquiza, DPWH Cordillera director, stopped the project on Monday.

Ms Arroyo told a Saturday press conference here that she preferred to build farm-to-market roads instead of the P88-million vehicular flyover that has divided city residents for six years now.

The President directed the DPWH to negotiate with the project contractor to allow it to realign the funds for the construction instead of a road in Kapangan, Benguet, and a cable car system for an interior Kalinga town.

"But I already received visitors, who are trying to talk me into [contesting] the President's decision. There are legal issues that may affect her decision," Alquiza admitted in a telephone interview.

A key question is the legality of realigning flyover funds now being supplemented by congressional support to another congressional district, he said.

Word of caution

Baguio Rep. Mauricio Domogan, who was mayor when the Marcos Highway project was started, also cautioned Malacañang about realigning project funds financed by foreign loans.

The DPWH had been asserting its decision to start the project this month, despite the objections of Baguio Mayor Braulio Yaranon.

Virginia de Guia, a former Baguio mayor, had been asking for an investigation since 2002 because the flyover project is the latest incarnation of an ambitious P140-million vehicular underpass project that DPWH tried to push in 1997.

Both designs intend to use the P44-million savings generated from the modernization of Marcos Highway.

Finances

Alquiza said DPWH has programmed a P19-million fund from the 2004 budget and is expecting P24 million in this year's national budget to complete the project's financial requirement.

"We don't know why DPWH continues to insist on using the money for a structure in that section of the city when it could be better used in maintaining the highway instead," De Guia said.

Benguet officials have also staked their claim over the savings, arguing that sections of the highway in their area needed repairs.

Benigno Ople; 76

BENIGNO Ople, younger brother of the late Foreign Secretary Blas F. Ople, died March 14 at age 76.

His body now lies at the family residence in San Agustin, Hagonoy, Bulacan. Interment is set on Saturday, March 17, at the Hagonoy Catholic Cemetery following a 2 p.m. Mass at the Santa Ana Parish Church.

Ople is survived by daughter Milane Ople Cruz, son-in-law King Philip Cruz and their two children Cenirie and Kian; brother Bernardo Ople; sister Anatolia Ople Arellano, nephews and nieces.

Benigno was one of four children of the late couple Felix Antonio Ople and Segundina Fajardo—the eldest being former Foreign Secretary Ople, who also served as senator, labor minister and member of the Constitutional Commission that drafted the 1986 Constitution.

The two others are former Bulacan Vice Gov. Bernardo Ople and Anatolia Ople Arellano.

Life Rx

from Dr. Ricardo Fernandez

CoQ$_{10}$: Antioxidant for the Heart

Heart failure is the leading cause for hospitalization in people over the age of 65 and the risk of developing it increases with age. Heart Disease is one of the top 5 "killer diseases" in the Philippines. In the United States, 20% of Heart Attack victims will die within 1 year of diagnosis, and 50% will die within 5 years. With these statistics, it is wise to look at all available treatments to help prevent it from happening.

What is CoQ$_{10}$?

Coenzyme Q$_{10}$ or CoQ$_{10}$ is a natural substance in the body that helps the cells produce energy and serves as an antioxidant to protect cells from free radicals. Even though it is naturally occurring in the body, the amount of CoQ$_{10}$ in the body declines with age and inadequate diets.

How can CoQ$_{10}$ help the heart?

Congestive heart failure or CHF happens when the heart is unable to pump blood throughout the body. CHF is not a disease in itself but a physiological result of some underlying condition. It is wise therefore to find out the underlying cause courtesy of your doctor and find out the appropriate medication.

CoQ$_{10}$ can be used as an additional therapy to help prevent and treat CHF. CoQ$_{10}$ has the ability to help increase the pumping force of the heart through enhanced cellular energy production. Simply put, it helps the heart pump blood more efficiently.

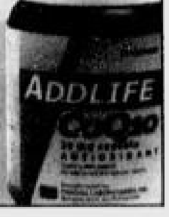
Benefits of CoQ$_{10}$ to the heart based on clinical trials conducted in the United States, Great Britain and Denmark:

- *Heart function improved by 20%*
- *Heart's capacity to pump blood efficiently improved nearly 35%*
- *Systolic blood pressure decreased by 4.4%*
- *End-diastolic volume decreased by 8.4%*
- *Cardiac workload improved by 14.3%*

Sources: www.webmd.com & www.lef.org

This is for educational purposes only and is not meant to replace your doctor's advice. Ask your doctor for more information or you can call the AddLife Hotline at 920-1911

Dr. Ricardo O. Fernandez finished his Doctor of Medicine at the University of Sto. Tomas. He is a consultant at the Makati Medical Center and Associate Board Examiner of the Philippine Board of Otolaryngology.



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ISANG PANAWAGAN SA PAMAHALAAN

"ISABATAS ANG TOTAL LOG BAN
SAGIPIN ANG KINABUKASAN"

Mayabong ang kagubatan sa Pilipinas noong 1900's, 70% ito ng buong kapuluan. Noong 1986 bumagsak ito sa 6% na lamang. Sa nakaraang mga taon maraming tawag ng kalikasan ang yumanig sa ating bansa. Nariyan ang Ormoc at pinakahuli ay ang sa Quezon at Aurora. Tuwina matapos ang mga nasabing trahedya maingay at malakas ang panawagan sa total log ban. Subalit paglipas ng panahon, nakakalimutan muli ang isyu ng kalikasan. Maghihintay pa bang muli ng isang trahedya upang magsalita at kumilos.

Panahon na upang magsagawa ng isang komprehensibong programa na tutugon sa isang suliranin na kung hindi ngayon gagawin ay baka huli na ang lahat. ISABATAS ANG TOTAL LOG BAN!

Maraming issue ang maaaring banggitin ngunit pangunahin para sa BULACAN ASSOCIATION OF WATER DISTRICTS (BAWD) ay ang isyu ng tubig. Alam nating lahat na ugnayan ng kagubatan at sariwang tubig buhat sa lupa. Ang tubig na basehan ng buhay at ng aming serbisyo sa mamamayan.

Kung mananatili ang pagkakalbo ng ating mga kagubatan, bumababa rin ang "water level", dahil sa pagbaba nito hihirap ang pagkuha ng tubig at sa katagalan papasok ang tubig alat sa mga pinagbukalan ng tubig. Kung mangyayari ito lolobo ang gastos upang maipagpatuloy ang serbisyo ng mga local na padaluyang tubig, At magdurusa ang mamamayan.

Kaya ang aming panawagan ay panatilihin ang total log ban. Tunay na malaking ambag sa ekonomiya ang industriya ng pagtrotroso, ngunit ipagpapalit ba natin ang kita nito sa kasalukuyan kung ang kapalit ay isang mas mahirap at walang kasiguruhan na buhay para sa ating mga anak sa kinabukasan.

Huwag na tayong maghintay ng palagim na palagim na trahedya bago kumilos. Ito na ang tama at akmang oras.

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BORACAY KILLINGS

Indictment of German upheld

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—The Aklan provincial prosecutor's office has upheld the indictment of Uwe Friesl, a German national, for four counts of murder in connection with last year's killings on Boracay Island.

In an order dated Feb. 22 but released only on March 9, Prosecutor Lourdes Quimpo-Mayor dismissed "for lack of merit" the motion for reconsideration filed by lawyer Jaime Ma. Flores II on behalf of Friesl.

Mayor said in her order that the affidavit of Patrick Higgs, which was part of the appeal, failed to "exculpate" Friesl and did not alter the earlier conclusion of her order.

Flores told the INQUIRER that he had yet to receive a copy of the resolution but would file a petition for review with the Department of Justice within 15 days upon receipt of the copy as prescribed by court rules.

Mind made up

"It seems that they (prosecutors) have already made up their mind despite the evidence we have presented," he said in a separate phone interview.

Flores filed the motion on Feb. 2, questioning Mayor's resolution that indicted Friesl and three other unidentified persons for the killing of Anton Forstenhausler, his guests Swiss-born vineyard owner Manfred Schoeni, Hong Kong-based architect John James Cowperthwaite, and Forstenhausler's Filipino maid Erma Sarmiento in May 2004.

Attached in the motion was the affidavit of Higgs who claimed that he was with Friesl when the suspect went to Forstenhausler's house after police investigators asked Friesl to help them in identifying the victims.

Footprints

The affidavit was to support Friesl's contention that his footprints were found in the crime scene because he helped the police identify the victims.

Friesl's indictment was based mainly on footprint specimens taken near the lavatory of the second floor of the mansion where one of the victims was found. Investigators said the footprints matched those of the 38-year-old mechanic.

The victims were found on May 3, 2004 with multiple stab wounds in Forstenhausler's three-story mansion on Mt. Luho in Sitio Bulabog, Barangay Balabag, Boracay. They were believed to have been killed on May 1.

Forstenhausler's widow Josephine welcomed Mayor's order.

"Mr. Friesl has to explain himself. This is the time for him to do so," she said in a telephone interview.

Friesl has eluded arrest despite a nationwide police hunt launched after a warrant for his arrest was issued following his indictment on Jan. 10. The DOJ had earlier issued a hold-departure order against Friesl.

Senior Supt. Jose Jorge Corpuz, Criminal Investigation and Detection Group director for Western Visayas, said his unit had coordinated with the German Embassy to help convince Friesl to surrender.

Hiding in Manila

He said the German could be hiding with friends in Manila.

"We are confident that we will get him," Corpuz said in a telephone interview.

Flores said it was up to his client if he would surrender or not. "I cannot tell him what to do but he is aware there's a warrant for his arrest."

He said the last time he talked to his client was early last month before he filed the appeal.

The killings shocked the country, particularly Boracay, a world-famous resort known for its white-sand beaches and clear waters.

They took place in Forstenhausler's mansion called Dolce Vita, which sits atop a hill overlooking the beaches.

Police earlier tagged workers in the mansion as suspects after investigators claimed robbery as a motive. The lawmen later zeroed in their inquiry on Friesl although the motive has remained unclear.

WATCHMEN
Two soldiers stand outside a room in one of the buildings at the Fernando Air Base in Lipa City, Batangas, as former rebels and communist sympathizers receive cash gifts from officials of the Air Force and Army. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

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UN asked to probe activists' killings

LUCENA CITY—A nationwide organization of militant fishermen has written the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights and called for a full-blown investigation of a series of acts of violence committed against members of leftist organizations in the country.

In a letter sent to Louise Arbour, UNCHR head, dated March 14, Pamalakaya national chair Fernando Hicap asked the commissioner to call the attention of President Macapagal-Arroyo to the "unstoppable killings" of political activists in the country.

"The fresh wave of violence perpetrated by Manila government and its military, paramilitary troops and revived death squads against leaders, members and advocates of people's issues and concerns in the Philippines has resulted in left and right violations of basic human rights, political killings, summary executions and involuntary disappearances over the last two weeks," Hicap said in his letter.

He said that if it deemed necessary, the UNCHR could conduct a full-blown inquiry into the series of political killings and exercise whatever available appropriate powers the UN had "to stop the Philippine government and its military from violating the basic rights of the people."

Hicap said the killings were meant to sow terror and silence critics of the government and the military establishment under the pretext of combating domestic and international terrorism. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

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Bird watching as Sagada ritual

By Desiree Caluza
Sagada, Mt. Province

FOR 90 days, in extreme heat or in pelting rain last year, photographers Tommy Hafalla and Roel Bimuyag watched the birds as they glided in the skies of Sagada, Mt. Province.

It was not an ordinary bird watching activity for Hafalla and Bimuyag. After all, they were not tourists or outsiders; they were part of Sagada's "inner circle."

It was a learning experience for Hafalla and Bimuyag to be part of that exclusive group dominated by Sagada elders in the *dap-ay* (circular stone structure that serves as meeting place for the village's tribal council). They shared the space with elders and participated in the rituals and age-old practices of the town.

During the observance of the ritual called the *dangtey* in April last year, Hafalla and Bimuyag, toting their cameras and wearing g-strings, listened to the flapping of the birds' wings as the feathered creatures flew upward.

"We looked for an omen, we listened to the birds and observed them if they were going up or down. [The] birds' [movements] were the determining factors if we would continue with the ritual. Since the birds were flying upward, we thought it was a good omen, so we proceeded with the *dangtey*," Hafalla said.

That was the second time since 1988 that Hafalla had documented the *dangtey* through his lens.

Dangtey is a cultural practice done by Sagada elders every 10 years. Hafalla said the ritual was not performed in 16 years because no elders volunteered to be the *menbanga* (host).

The 2004 ritual was captured by Hafalla and Bimuyag in black and white photographs now on exhibit at the Yoghourt House in Sagada.

In earlier days, the *dangtey* was performed to unite Sagada and to protect the villages from headhunters.

Headhunting rites

American anthropologist and Cordillera historian William Henry Scott, in his book "Sagada Reader," referred to the *dangtey* as an elaborate series of fertility and headhunting rites whose elements are found in the more common *wange* and *begnas* ceremonies performed in the town.

The *wange* is performed to celebrate the growth of crops and characterized by the carrying around of a sacrificial hog from one *dap-ay* to the next, emphasizing the concept of village unity.

Scott described the *begnas* as a set of communal welfare rites traced to the headhunting days in which the spirits of both living and dead Sagadans are called home to protect the villages, induce fertility or bring vengeance.

In the *begnas*, omens are read from the gall bladders of sacrificial pigs and chickens, and songs of forest birds. Elders also invoke and petition for two tree-dwelling guardian spirits, two major water sources and even houses, yards and the stones of the *dap-ay* platforms for village permanence, cooperation and peace.

"Although the components of the *dangtey* involve no real innovations, the manner of its revelation was suitably mysterious," Scott wrote.

The *dangtey* is believed to have been introduced by Biag, a 17th-century cultural hero and considered Sagada's most important figure.

"The *dangtey* is not necessarily performed every decade. When the time comes, even only in an eight-year span and as long as it is needed, they will have to do it," Hafalla said.

He said it was now practiced by Sagadans for the welfare of the villagers and to protect them from sickness and to take away bad luck.

Woman elder

Last year, a woman elder named Conyap, who represented the *dap-ay* Bilig, and a male elder named Kakay Domingo, who represented the *dap-ay* Malingeb, agreed to host the ritual.

Since women are not allowed to sit in the *dap-ay* during rituals dominated by men, the *dangtey* is the only time that a woman could mingle with the men for a day, as long as she is the *menbanga*.

A woman host would become part of the ritual if she were adorned with the *buwaya*, a necklace made of boar tusks.

The *buwaya* is usually worn by men elevated to the status of elders or people who are considered to have displayed wisdom and integrity. These men participate in decision-making processes involving the community.

As a *menbanga*, a woman could govern the *dap-ay* for a day. However, as a host, she is not allowed to leave the village for 40 days. The male host in the other *dap-ay* will fast for five days.

The woman host is also tasked with holding a basket filled with pig tails. A part of the *dangtey* is to cut a portion of the tail where it will be placed in a ritual basket used by Sagada elders for more than 100 years.

KAKAY Domingo, the male host or "menbanga" of the rarely held Sagada ritual called "dangtey," is shown in this photo taken by Roel Bimuyag.

Meningo lesson: Never, never say 'Don't panic'

By Frank Cimatu
Baguio City

MOMENTS before the Baguio Flower Festival parade last month, people in the city still refused to converge along Session Road, wary of the advice against meningococcemia prevention to "avoid crowded places."

But when the parade started, residents, including tourists, had no recourse but to plunge into the sea of humanity.

Dr. Luningning Villa, chief of the emerging and reemerging diseases unit of the Department of Health and the most visible person during the meningo crisis, was invited to join the parade but some politicians later told her not to because she might evoke memories of the scare again.

She didn't and lost P5,000 to a pickpocket who mingled with the spectators.

As of now, there were no cases of meningococcal infection that resulted from that weekend tourist crowd.

Crossing their fingers, the DOH and Baguio reporters, who both bore the brunt for the meningo scare, held an assessment on how they handled the crisis and how to better handle it.

Villa said that risk communication was indeed risqué.

"Our goal is to communicate to the public to restore trust and to foster public resilience and guide them," she said.

She said the meningococcemia incident, when it first came out, had all the ingredients of a dreadful situation because "the threat is more horrific, there is no perception on who is in control, it is man-made, there is no perceived choice, children are affected and there is fear of the uncertain."

"When people seem to be overreacting early in a crisis, they are often going through an 'adjustment reaction,'" she said. "People are temporarily hyper vigilant and worry about the 'what if?'"

For Baguio, this meant wearing surgical masks and popping antibiotics.

Lessons

"One of the lessons which some of us forgot is not to say, 'Do not panic,' because the more that people hear 'panic,' they panic," Villa said.

The local media were also partly to blame, interviewing politicians who have no idea on what to do and relying on text messages and rumors.

Villa said doctors at first gave different figures because they were giving out statistics as they come to them.

Eventually, the DOH and the local media decided on a daily press conference with designated spokespersons giving uniform data.

Some reporters still erroneously interpreted the data or relied on different standards and sources altogether. One of these is the figure on when to declare an outbreak.

Dr. Ramoncito Navarro, chief investigator of the National Epidemiological Center, said that even if meningo may be an old and endemic disease in the country ("Meningo's like a faded *artista* who made a grand entrance"), it is relatively rare and sporadic.

Different guidelines

So when it broke out in Baguio, the government did not know whether to use the guideline of the World Health Organization, the United States-based Center for Disease Control and Prevention, or others.

"Even in the US, each state has its own figure to ascertain an outbreak for meningococcemia," Navarro said.

Because of this, the DOH will soon present a national guideline for meningococcal disease.

Even the use of "outbreak" was debated upon by the DOH. Some said that "technically," there was an outbreak but they chose the less harmless phrase "unusual increase."

Villa said it was unfortunate that the crisis would occur in Baguio, a tourist resort. "How far should we become transparent? Risk communication means trying to solve a problem while it is small to avoid social, political and economic disruption," she said.

"It is to be reassuring but not to the point *na baka sabihin na rin ng mga tao na nambobola kami* (people might say we were fooling them)," she said.

Media reports

Some reporters, however, tried to fan the panic.

Villa cited a morning television show which interviewed her a week before the flower festival while showing footage taken in January of residents wearing surgical masks.

Another local radio broadcaster insisted not only on reporting an apparent gag on meningococcemia cases but also on other diseases, such as German measles and dengue fever.

"If the problem is minimal, don't harp on it," Villa said. "Or else you will have an audience that will contract 'warning fatigue' and you might become the [boy who cried] wolf," she told reporters.

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Stun bombs usher cell to cell attack

From page A1

the Philippine National Police Special Action Force and the Regional Special Action Unit attacked from three points—up front, at the back and from the roof of the four-story building which the Abu Sayyaf inmates had seized at breakfast time Monday.

Ladders used

The assault units which attacked from the roof used a ladder to get to the top of the building.

The assault units were armed with semiautomatic rifles, grenades and gas masks. Some were lucky enough to be equipped with bulletproof vests.

The Abu Sayyaf men put up strong defenses, a junior official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"The fighting was mostly on the first and second floors," he said.

Bedsheets in flames

"They burned bedsheets on the right side of the first floor to hide where the shots were coming from," the INQUIRER source added.

As a result, the prison walls were all blackened.

Three gates led to the entry point up front—but the third was locked, slowing down the attack.

"They shot it up to open it," the junior official said.

Padlocks destroyed

Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes said the assault team had a hard time because they had to sweep the floors slowly, blasting the padlocks of the cells.

All this time, the assault teams were yelling at the inmates to lie on the floor to indicate that they had no intention to fight, Reyes said.

At the end of the one-hour, 55-minute assault, 12 inmates were dead on the first floor, where the Abu Sayyaf gunmen had apparently chosen to make their last stand.

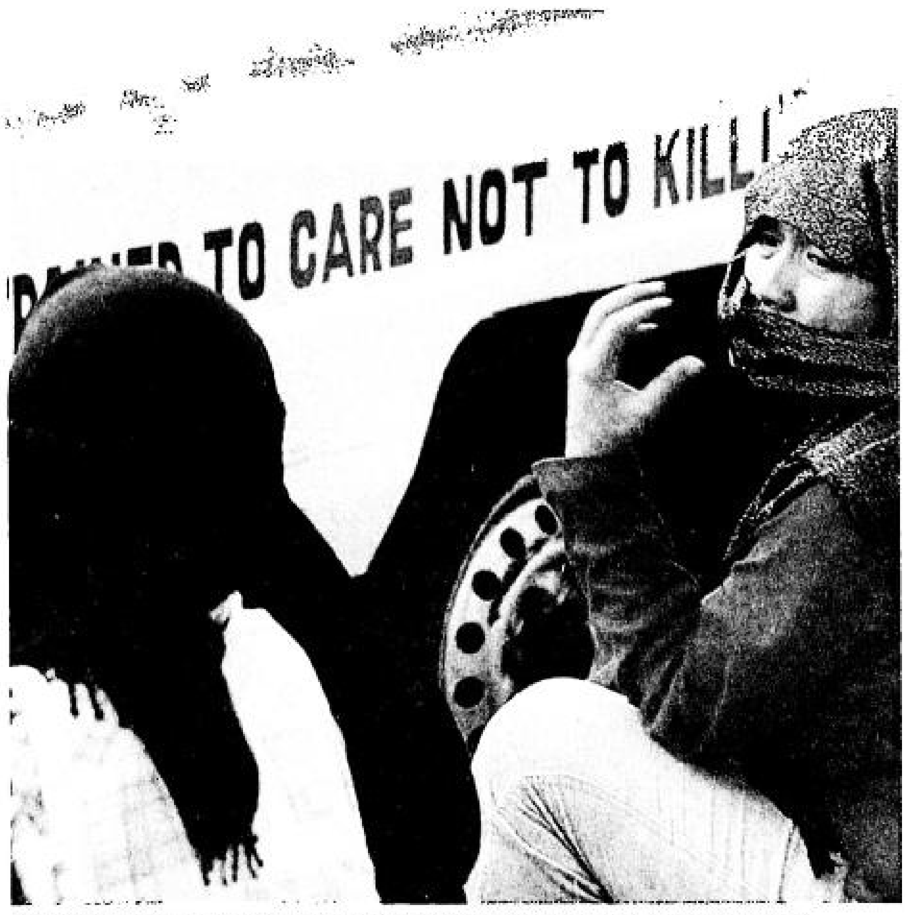
Ten others were found on the second floor or on the staircase, officials said.

Robot's job

They said that the one-legged Commander Robot, who was found slumped on the first floor, appeared to have been the one who was handing out magazine clips to his comrades.

"There were magazines beside him," one official said.

By 10:30 a.m., or more than an hour after the attack began, the assault team had already secured the 2nd, 3rd and 4th floors.


TO CARE NOT TO KILL!

RELATIVES of Muslim prisoners take their positions at the gate of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology anxiously waiting for word about their loved ones. JESS YUSON

But the resistance was very strong on the ground floor.

"When we got there, we saw that they had put up their stronghold there. They fought it out," another SAF member said.

Raiders said the inmates also locked the entry points to various floors. This forced them to use bolt cutters or simply fire at the locks to disable them, he said.

'Job well done'

Reyes congratulated the assaulting team and said the assault was a clear warning to others.

"Our soldiers were very disciplined ... we should praise them," Reyes said.

"Despite a very difficult situation, the casualties were kept to a minimum," he said.

Senior Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil, PNP spokesperson, said people should not forget what Commander Robot and Commander Kosovo, also killed in the assault, had done as bandits.

Emerging from the compound after the attack, SAF men said the inmates tried to slow down the police assault by laying booby traps in the building crammed with more than 400 detainees.

The tear gas used in the break-in was so strong its effects lasted for four hours.

Begging for water

"That's why the prisoners were all shouting, begging for water," one official said, referring to dozens of inmates seen waving from the upper floors of the jailhouse and nearby building.

Firemen bombarded them with their water cannons.

Strong dollar, VAT bill spoil peso's 6-day rally

From page A1

The peso closed at 54.13 at the Philippine Dealing System yesterday, down from a 20-month high of 53.13 on Monday, while the value of trade dropped to $339.13 million from $416 million.

The peso traded between an intra-day high of 54 and an intra-day low of 54.245 against the US dollar.

According to some traders, the botched jailbreak attempt of suspected Abu Sayyaf members that resulted in the killing of 22 detainees after police stormed a maximum-security jail was not a big factor in the peso's fall although it prompted some market participants to exercise caution on the domestic currency.

Currency traders said many banks had "squared off" their foreign-exchange positions, buying dollars to replace what they had borrowed when they were aggressively dumping the greenback in anticipation of a further decline in the value of the US currency.

Technical correction

Despite improved prospects of more foreign fund inflows into the domestic market, traders said the technical correction yesterday was spurred by the strengthening of the US dollar against most currencies in the region.

They added that the peso was further pressured by certain domestic factors, in particular the concern that the value-added tax bill—a key point of President Macapagal-Arroyo's tax-reform package—might not pass in Congress.

The market is awaiting the final version of the VAT bill, which the Senate is expected to produce soon.

Deliberations on the VAT bill, which aims to increase the VAT rate from the present 10 percent to 12 percent, has been dragged down by political bickering in the Senate.

Traders said the peso could weaken further before it resumes its upward trend.

The peso has climbed 4.3 percent this year, making it Asia's best-performing currency.

"Expect a sizable correction toward the P54.50-to-the-dollar level in the coming days," said one trader.

A batch of planned initial public offerings (IPOs) by a number of domestic companies has significantly helped both the stock market and the peso in recent days, on top of IPOs already in the pipeline such as those of the water utility, the Manila Water Co., and SM Investments Corp., the holding company of the eponymous shopping-mall chain.

Record OFW's remittances

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported yesterday that dollars sent home by overseas Filipino workers grew by 15.9 percent, reaching $723 million in January from a year ago.

"The increase in the level of remittances during the month reflected the higher deployment of Filipino workers abroad and the sustained efforts of local commercial banks to intermediate these remittances and channel them through the banking system," BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura announced yesterday.

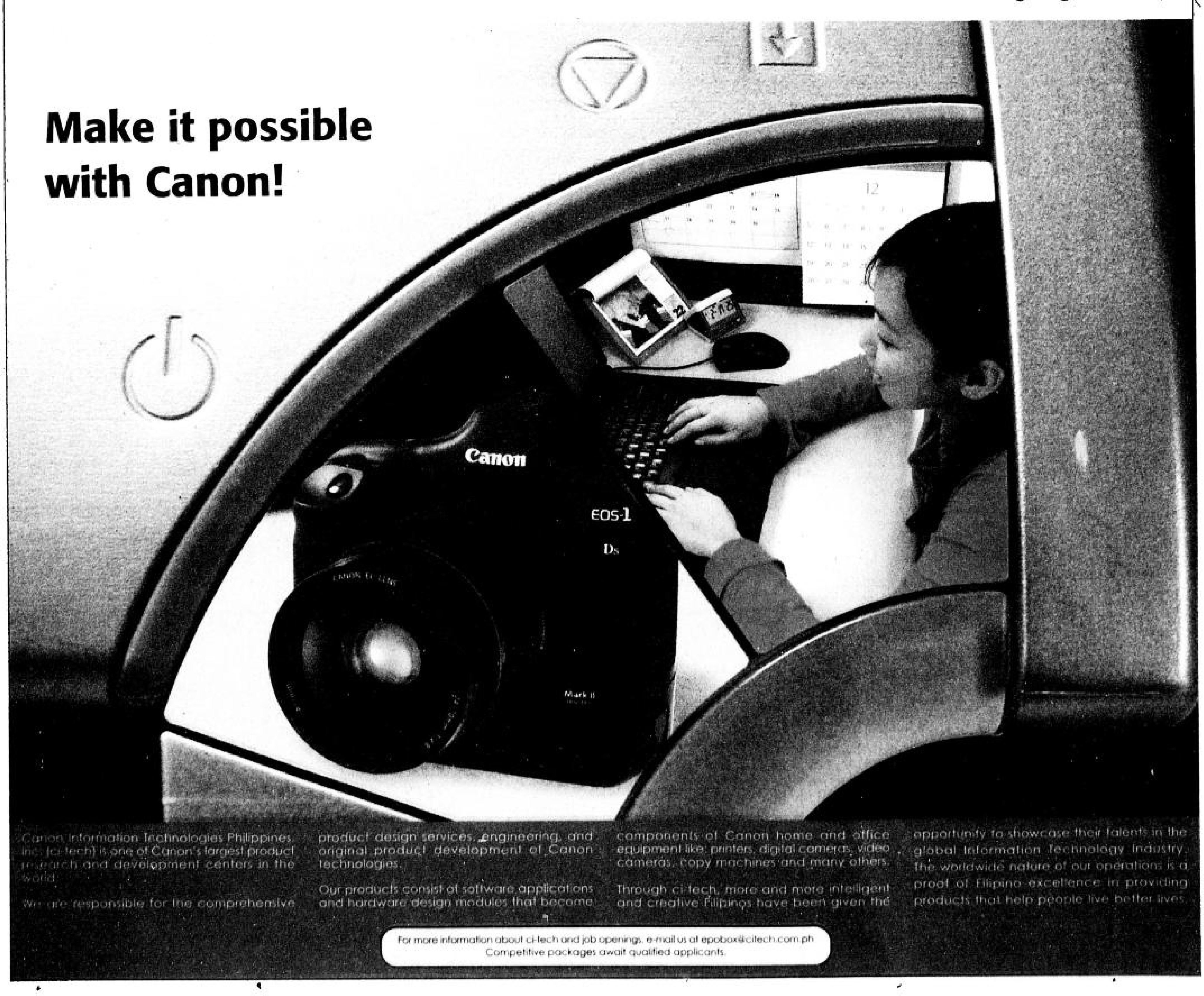
The record OFW remittances in January came from the United States, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates.

The dollar inflows from Filipino workers overseas are an important component in both the national income account and the balance of payments.

Projected high of $9B

They also help support the peso by providing US dollar liquidity to the market.

"For 2005, the level of remittances is projected to reach the $9-billion mark based on a conservative annual growth of 6 percent," Buenaventura said.



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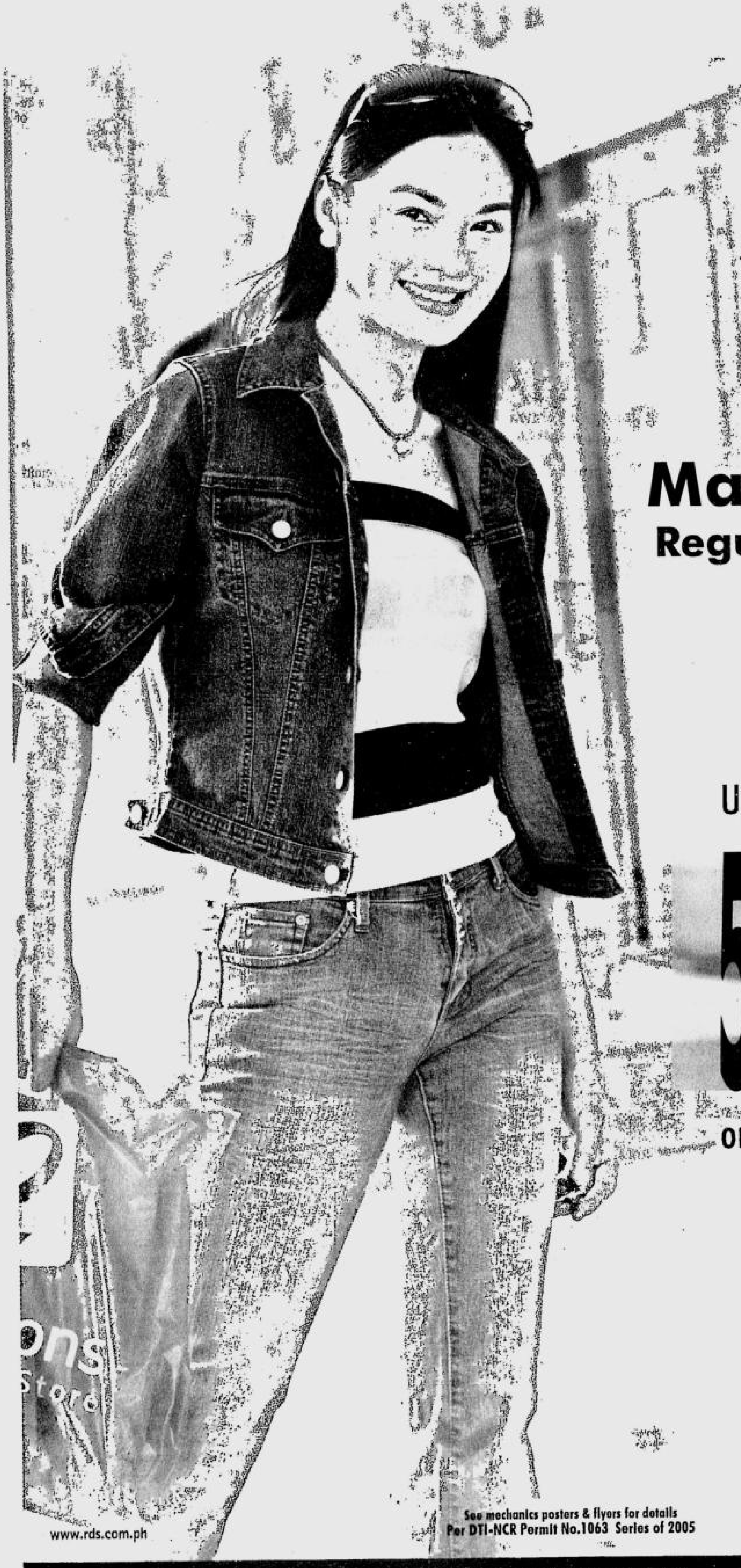

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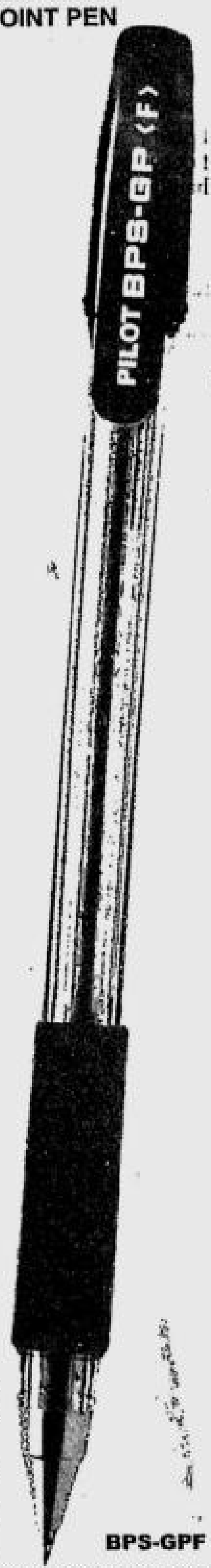

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Nida mom dies without seeing justice

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and Alcuin Papa

SHE DIED waiting for justice.

The mother of slain movie actress Nida Blanca died Sunday night after three years of seeking justice for her daughter.

Inocencia G. Acueza passed away at about 9 p.m. at the Cardinal Santos Memorial Hospital in San Juan due to complications from pneumonia, family friend and actress Caridad Sanchez told the INQUIRER.

Blanca's daughter and only child Kaye Torres and other relatives were with Acueza in her room when she passed away at about 9 p.m.

The old woman reportedly went peacefully in her sleep.

Acueza was 91 years old.

Sanchez said Nida's mother was brought to hospital for her regular check-up sometime last week. But doctors found her already suffering from pneumonia.

Acueza was confined in the hospital for almost a week before she passed away.

"I'm sure there was sadness in her heart, because justice for her daughter had eluded her," Sanchez said over the phone.

Blanca, Dorothy Jones in real life, was murdered more than three years ago on Nov. 7, 2001, at the sixth floor parking area of the Atlanta Centre along Annapolis Street, San Juan.

Strunk still suspect

Authorities are now going after Blanca's husband Rod Lawrence Strunk, who allegedly planned and carried out her murder.

Strunk, an American, was able to fly to the United States on Jan. 21, 2002, after initial charges filed against him were dropped with the recantation of the testimony of then star witness Philip Medel.

Sanchez said the mother and her daughter "were very close."

"I often tell Dorothy she got her genes for being a good comedienne from Inay (Acueza)," Sanchez said.

Acueza was good at throwing jokes and loved to chat, Sanchez added.

But the jokes came fewer after the murder.

Sanchez said they also tried to avoid talking about the still unsolved murder in front of Acueza.

"Inay remained strong despite old age. She was waiting for justice for her only daughter," she added.

If Sanchez felt any consolation, she said it was in believing in her heart that Acueza and Jones were finally reunited.

"Now, there are two of them up there who can whisper to the Lord (to let the truth out about the murder)," Sanchez added.

Acueza's body is at the Loyola Memorial Park Chapel in Marikina City.

She is due to be buried there beside her daughter on Thursday.

ACUEZA FILE PHOTO

Councilors debate over; slash San Juan hospital's 2005 budget

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE SAN Juan Municipal Council has approved the town's budget for 2005 after weeks of delay due to debates on the budget of the town's hospital.

The budget was approved in a special session last week after councilors slashed P5 million from the San Juan Medical Center's proposed P84-million funding.

Vice Mayor Boy Celles told the INQUIRER yesterday that the cut was on the allotment for supplies and equipment.

'Not enough'

Sought for comment, hospital director Lorenzo Hocson said the approved budget was not enough.

But the council said the hospital could ask for a supplemental budget later on.

The passage of the budget for the town was delayed after some councilors questioned the hospital appropriation, claiming it was spending too much on consultants.

But Hocson said the hospital had not significantly increased the number of its consultants since it became fully operational in 1997.

He also told the INQUIRER yesterday he had explained to the councilors that the hospital only had 43 consultants. The maximum number of consultants is 44.

P397M budget

Earlier, the municipal council approved the ordinance appropriating more than P397 million as municipal budget for 2005.

But it did not approve the more than P84 million budget for the public hospital.

Because of the deadlock, Mayor JV Ejercito urged the council to hold a special session apart from the regular session last week.

The town budget, along with that of the hospital, was passed on Tuesday.

Still, the hospital would have to be subjected to an independent audit, Celles said.

"The audit would be conducted by non-members of the municipality in the next three months," the vice mayor added.

The hospital at the back of the Municipal Hall has a 150-bed capacity.

Hospital officials earlier expressed fears that the delay in the budget, if not addressed, would affect their operations.

Taguig standoff was mayor's fear come true

By Luige A. del Puerto

ALMOST five years ago, Mayor Freddie Tiñga and the Taguig Council vehemently protested the transfer of Abu Sayyaf detainees to Camp Bagong Diwa in their city.

The local officials felt the presence of the detainees could create security problems, as well as reinforce a negative perception of Muslims in Taguig, then still a town.

They also feared investors would think twice about coming to Taguig with the Abu Sayyaf around. Their grievance was brought to the Supreme Court, and copies of their petition were sent to other concerned agencies. But he said no one paid any attention to their concerns.

"Even the Muslim residents protested the presence of the Abu Sayyaf in Camp Bagong Diwa," Tiñga said. "That was our point. We protested against the move to bring them here. The Muslims in Taguig were against it because it gave them a bad name.

"The perception that was reinforced was that because the Abu Sayyaf men were in the city, therefore, all the Muslims in Taguig were members of the group," Tiñga said.

An even bigger concern was the possible security problem that could be created. "I hate to say it. But you know, I think everybody does not like the term 'I told you so'," the mayor added.

Tiñga had said the Abu Sayyaf men should have been tried in Mindanao, where they were from. Around five percent of Taguig's 600,000 residents are Muslims, most of them living in Maharlika Village.

Taguig earned around P700 million in revenues last year. The city boasts of Fort Bonifacio, its biggest commercial center.

Tiñga said what he had hoped for was to showcase Taguig as a place of harmony, where Muslims and Christians could co-exist.

"That was the message we wanted to say—that here in Taguig, there could be harmony between Muslims and Christians," he said.

Only last week, he said he had talked to President Macapagal-Arroyo about selling the city as an investment haven for businessmen from rich Muslim countries.

Maharlika Village used to be a quiet village, according to the mayor. "There was no problem with the old Muslim residents. When the new ones started coming, that's when the problems started," he said.

Military and police intelligence units constantly monitor Maharlika Village which they had tagged as a terrorist sanctuary.

The police had raided the village several times in the past, hauling off dozens of men suspected of having ties to terrorist groups in the South. Most of them were later released for lack of evidence to pin them down.

"Sa hirap ng buhay ngayon, buti na lang merong gamot na may puso!"
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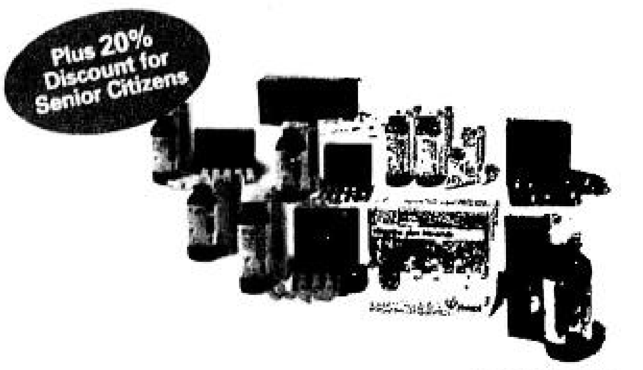

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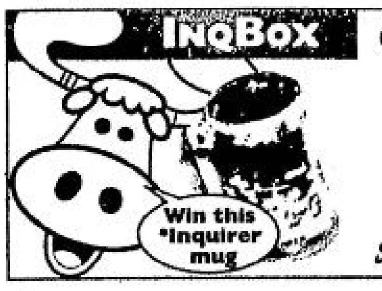

Question of the Week

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Inquirer
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Quezon City is country's richest city

By DJ Yap

FOR THE THIRD straight year, Quezon City emerged as the richest city in the country in 2004, besting its rivals Manila and Makati.

The city posted the biggest general fund, or the income used by local government units for its operations, among the 17 cities and towns in Metro Manila, according to figures released by the Department of Finance.

The honor could be attributed to lesser campaign spending in the May 2004 elections compared to the other cities, joked Quezon City Treasurer Victor Endriga.

Biggest source

Quezon City posted a total income of P5.8 billion last year, compared to the P5.5 billion and P4.5 billion registered by the cities of Manila and Makati, respectively.

Business taxes again provided the biggest source of revenues for Quezon City, contributing as much as P2.8 billion.

Surplus

The city benefited from taxes contributed by big companies in Quezon City, particularly its top taxpayers, which included ABS-CBN, SM Mega Holdings, and IBM Philippines.

Endriga noted that Quezon City even had a budgetary surplus of P184.7 million and a cash surplus of P2 billion, thus registering the biggest net income among the Metro Manila cities.

'Earn more, spend less'

Endriga said Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr.'s "Earn more, spend less" campaign greatly helped ensure the sound fiscal management of the city's resources.

The bulk of the city's expenditures went to infrastructure projects, including the construction or repair of access roads, and underpasses, and the beautification of the Quezon Memorial Circle.

In 2002 and 2003, Quezon City was also ranked the richest city in the country by the Commission on Audit.

DELA Cruz

Cancer victim needs help

RHABDOMYOSARCOMA is a fast-growing, highly malignant tumor characterized by a noticeable lump on the body that usually occurs in children aged 2 to 6, or 15 to 19. Fifty percent of these children can expect to survive for five years.

However, this soft tissue cancer can also affect people like Delfin dela Cruz, 47.

Dela Cruz needs help to be able to undergo treatment, which is typically a combination of surgery, chemotherapy and radiation.

Interested donors may contact Carmelita dela Cruz at 0920-5732553, or e-mail this section at metrodesk@inquirer.com.ph.

MMDA seeks chance

GIVE it a chance.

The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority has this to say to bus drivers complaining of the pink fences it had placed along Edsa.

"If we give up the fences, it would be like we surrendered to the bus drivers. The situation will worsen. This is all part of discipline," said MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando.

Fernando was reacting to bus drivers who had gone irate over the MMDA's placement of steel fences, meant to separate yellow lanes from the rest of the thoroughfare. *Tarra V. Quismundo*

PCG patrol vs 'colorum' ferries

By Leila B. Salaverria

PENDING the issuance of additional safety regulations for river ferries, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has stepped up its patrol against vessels plying the Pasig River without a permit to prevent a repeat of last week's incident when a boat capsized. Two persons died as they tried to rescue passengers who fell off the boat.

The PCG patrol boats plying the Pasig River are keeping an eye on motorized bancas that ferry passengers from one side of the river to the other, in case these are operating without permits and are violating existing safety rules, said Commodore Wilfredo Tamayo, head of the PCG's National Capital Region division.

"The best we can do is to keep these ferries called "colorum" off the river so we can better assure the safety of passengers by getting them to use authorized means of transport," he said.

Upon instructions from PCG Commandant Vice-Admiral Arthur Gosingan, Tamayo earlier investigated the capsizing of a ferry that led to the drowning of two men who jumped into the water to rescue the ferry's passengers. He found out that the ferry had no permit to operate.

Tamayo recommended that the Maritime Industry Authority come up with additional safety measures for river ferries because of the incident.

The best preventive measure against ferry accidents at the Pasig River would be the implementation of more stringent safety rules for operators and passengers, he added.

Tamayo said it would be difficult to ban the river ferries because there is a demand for it from people who find it time consuming to use land transport.

He noted that some public utility vehicles take circuitous routes before crossing the bridges, or get hampered by traffic jams.

Tamayo said the planned Pasig River ferry project of the transportation department would likely guarantee safer passage along and across the said waterway.

Manila teachers go back to school

By Tina G. Santos

HUNDREDS of Manila's public high school teachers would again become students this summer as they take a refresher course in English.

Ma. Luisa Quinones, superintendent of Manila's Division of City Schools (DCS), said the teachers would be participating in an English proficiency training program as part of the city's English-only policy in schools.

This developed as local officials directed heads of city-run educational institutions to intensify their respective English proficiency programs in order to maximize its benefits for the students and teachers.

Noting the need for an English refresher course, local school officials said teachers had grammar problems in both spoken and written English, something that they would not want the teachers to pass on to students.

The refresher course aims to expose teachers, and eventually the students, in the practical use of spoken English.

It also intends to refresh teachers' knowledge of the nuances and intricacies of English as a medium of instruction and facilitate language acquisition through formal and functional use.

Quinones also disclosed that at least 416 elementary and high school teachers recently completed a training course for core trainers.

Malabon City official slain in shootout

A MALABON City Hall official who allegedly recruited men who took part in the violent demolition of squatter shanties in Barangay Tonsuya was killed Monday afternoon.

Police reports said Osmundo Manapat, 50, supervisor of the city's Solid Waste and Management Office, was killed while shooting it out with three unidentified men inside the city dump in Barangay Catmon.

Manapat, who was reportedly armed with a .38-caliber revolver, was engaging two of the men in a shootout when the third man came from behind and shot him in the nape, killing him on the spot.

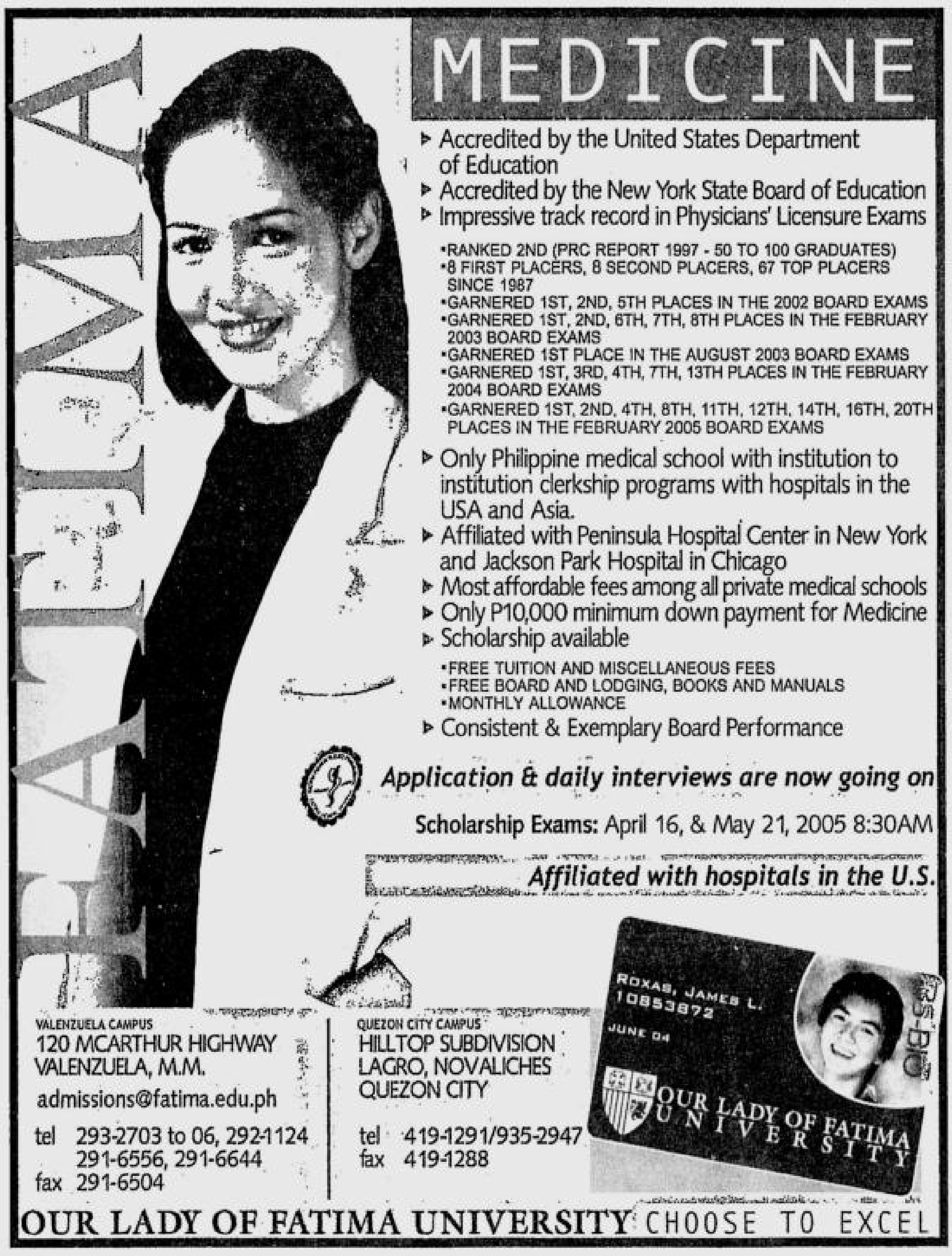
"We are looking into reports that the killing was connected in the recent demolition," a police official said when asked about the motive of the killing.

A motorcycle with a false license plate was the police's only lead. The vehicle was turned over to them by a traffic enforcer who witnessed the incident.

The traffic enforcer described suspects as between 20 and 25 years old and medium built.

The suspects, according to the witness, took the victim's firearm before leaving and fled towards Tonsuya.

City Mayor Canuto Oreta told the INQUIRER that prior to the demolition in Tonsuya, he confronted Manapat who denied he was recruiting men for that operation. *Nancy C. Carvajal*



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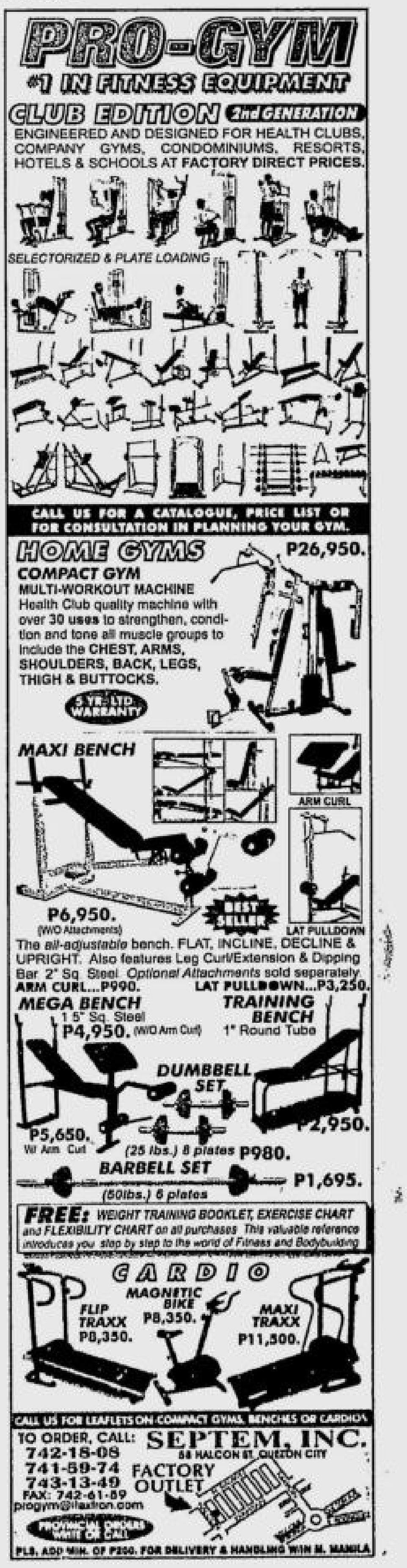

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Robots Overture - Rodney Theme	rodneytheme
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Shine	rshine
Wonderful Night	wonderfulnite
Right Thurr	rightthurr
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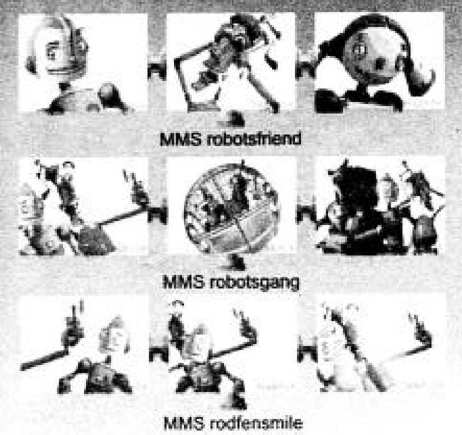
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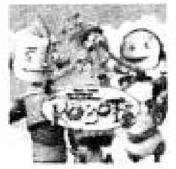

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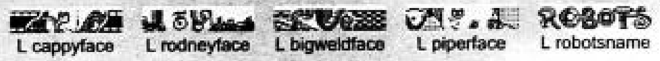
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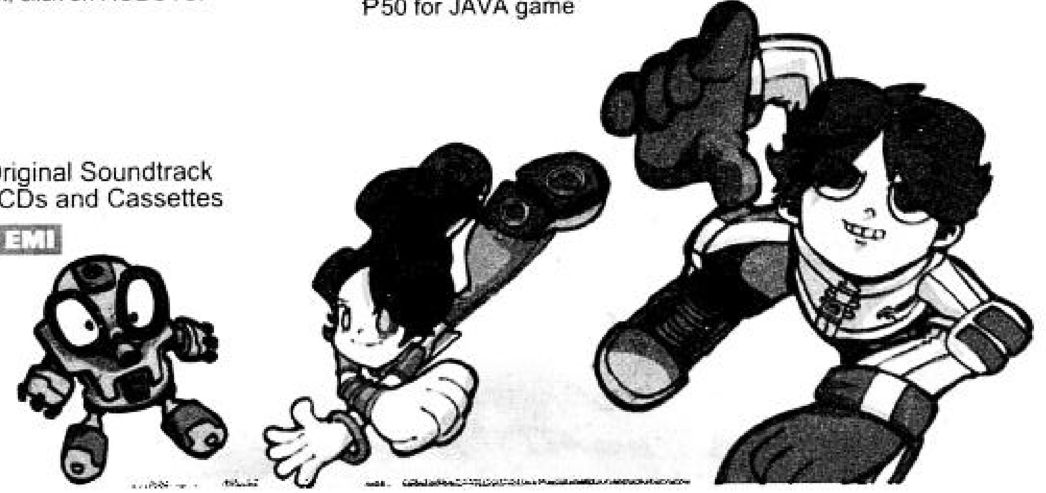

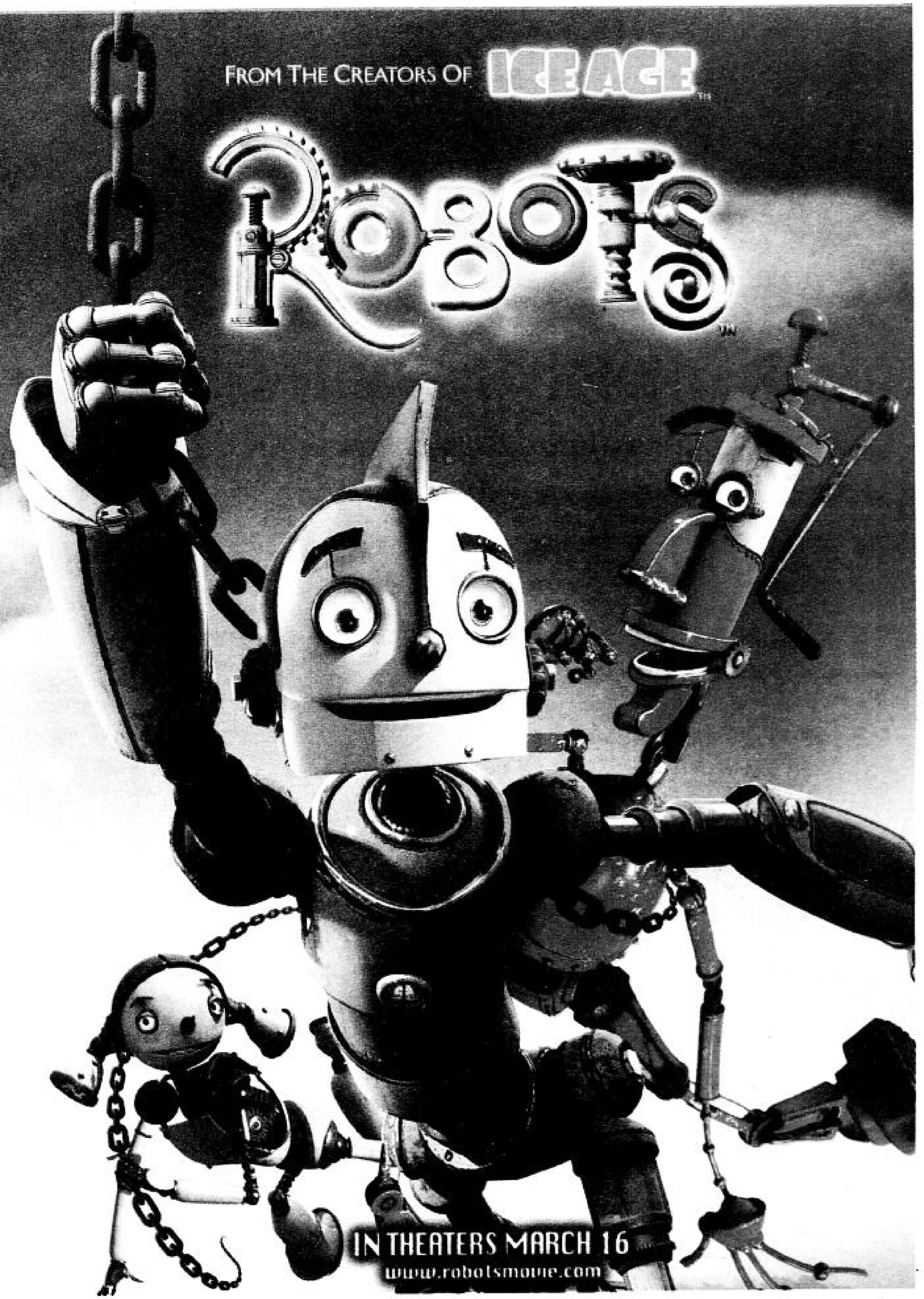
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PHILSOC

IT'S ON!: Arroyo (right) and Cojuangco (second from left) unveil the SEAG logo as Pagdanganan and Ramirez celebrate the occasion.
ROGER MARGALLO

Philsoc 'war chest' now P640M with 8 months to go

By Jasmine W. Payo

AUSTERITY is the operational word in the country's hosting of the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

Top sports officials, however, remain hopeful that the Games would surpass all expectations.

"We're going to pursue excellence, practice austerity and maximize creativity," Philippine SEAG Organizing Committee (Philsoc) chair Obet Pagdanganan said during the Games 'marketing launch yesterday at the Dragon Gate Restaurant on Roxas Boulevard.

With only eight months to go before the biennial event kicks off on Nov. 27, the Philsoc marketing

AUSTERE/ A28

The Philippine eagle over the tarsier

THE TARSIER, a rare, small primate found in Bohol, was the initial mascot choice for the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

But late last year, the Philippine SEAG Organizing Committee decided that the Philippine Eagle was a more apt symbol.

A gray Philippine Eagle, with its wings spread wide open, was unveiled as the official mascot yesterday.

"We feel that the Philippine Eagle represents the aspiration and capabilities of the Filipino people," explained Philsoc chair Obet Pagdanganan. "It shows our capability to do well, to excel, fly high and achieve."

The mascot was designed by advertising firm Campaigns and Grey. *Jasmine W. Payo*

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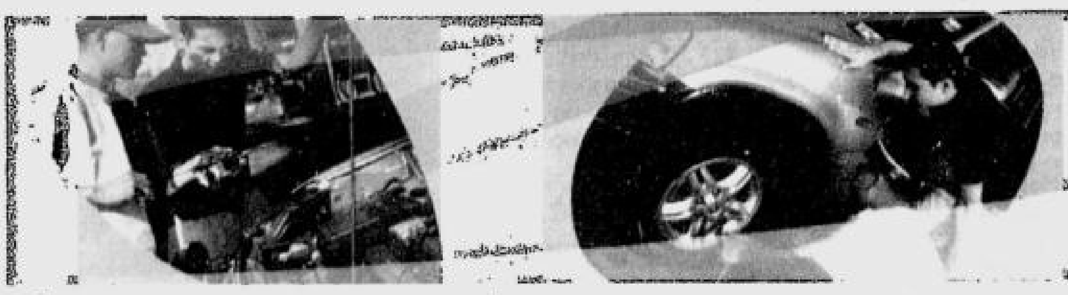

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KO clamor makes Pacquiao uneasy

DAN TRINIDAD

PACQUIAO gets a good luck kiss from a female admirer before departing for Las Vegas Monday.

By Recah Trinidad

LAS VEGAS—It was not the first time he had heard of it, but Manny Pacquiao, who returned to this dazzling capital for a shot at immortality yesterday, stammered and shook his head when reminded of the overwhelming clamor for a knockout victory back home.

He can't say it, a fidgety Pacquiao explained a day after a poll of several fight experts gave the most famous living Filipino only a 50-50 chance of beating Mexican boxing great Erik Morales.

"*Mahirap, hindi puwede masabi* (It's tough, you can never tell)," he shrugged.

The two warriors of contrasting styles and upbringing clash on Saturday evening (Sunday morning in Manila) at the MGM Grand Garden Arena, with Pacquiao making it as the first fighter from the Orient to headline a monumental pay-per-view card.

The odds in the fight are expected to even up toward the weekend, with Mexican money set to flood the sports booking counters here.

Pacquiao, who was heavily favored when the card was bared in January, however, enjoyed a slight minus-130 edge at the windows. This means a fan could win only $100 if he puts $130 on Pacquiao.

A $110 bet on Morales would pay $100.

No red carpet was rolled out but Pacquiao, who could have been mistaken for a straying Filipino seaman with his moustache and baby beard, received a welcome fit for a visiting dignitary when he entered the vast MGM Grand main lobby, with his lovely wife, Jinkee, in tow.

Pacquiao, in a thin yellow jacket bearing the insignia of Team Pacquiao, was led onto a special podium as security people tried to control spectators who mingled with a big group of mediamen.

After he was through talking to reporters, Pacquiao was made to lead his entourage into a carpeted VIP room where he got adoring assistance from the staff as he ordered seven rooms for his big group that drove here from Los Angeles in a seven-car convoy.

Pacquiao told the INQUIRER he felt as strong as he was when he fought Mexican Juan Manuel Marquez to a controversial draw here last May.

But, just to make sure he does not get derailed and suffer foot blisters again, Pacquiao said he brought enough pairs of extra thick socks.

"Darlington, *siyempre*," he quipped.

He finished sparring earlier yesterday, completing a total of 161 rounds at the Wild Card Gym in Hollywood. Pacquiao will, however, continue to jog in the morning and do regular afternoon gym work until Thursday.

The official weigh-in will be on Friday.

Meanwhile, the INQUIRER yesterday continued to receive text messages from Manila insisting Pacquiao would prevail by knockout inside six rounds. Two of the messages came from renowned jazz artist Richard Merck and restaurateur Peter Lee of the Mr. Peter Lee's Hong Kong Tea House chain.

Pacquiao, in a brief talk with the INQUIRER before he entered the VIP room, assured that he would try his very best for his countrymen.

"*Pero kailangan respetuhin din natin si* Morales (We must respect Morales)," he said.

Morales is expected to check in at the MGM Grand today, straight from his training site in the Mexican mountains.

Pacquiao is himself aware that Morales would be coming in at his best form for their March 19 showdown.

Pacquiao was given a suite with a one-way phone, while his wife will be staying in a separate room on the 18th floor of the MGM Grand whose lobbies are adorned with framed, lighted pictures of Pacquiao and Morales drumbeating the rare RP-vs-Mexico boxing fiesta.

Roach: It'll be Manny inside 10

LAST May, Freddie Roach had warned that Juan Manuel Marquez was a complicated fighter.

But Manny Pacquiao had insisted it would be easy to stop the Mexican counterpuncher.

Roach has been proven right after Marquez escaped with a draw despite being downed three times in the first round.

ROACH: 10 rounds

Curiously, Pacquiao and Roach have shifted stands for the Erik Morales fight.

While Pacquiao has cautioned fans against expecting a KO win, Roach now sounds certain his fighter would be able to win by knockout inside 10 rounds.

"Quite frankly, Morales is an easier fight than a rematch with Marquez or Marco Antonio Barrera," Roach said.

Roach did agree that Morales, taller, will probably enter the ring at least 10 lb heavier than Pacquiao.

"Frankly, that will be to our advantage since he will be slower and he won't be able to cope with Manny's speed," Roach claimed.

But the key, Roach bared, is that it's easy "to draw Morales into a war and that is where he will pay the price because of the devastating punching power of Manny."

Just the same, Roach told Pacquiao to watch out because Morales is effective at close range with his uppercut.

But he said Pacquiao "hits very hard, is quick and now knows how to box and moves very well." *Recah Trinidad*

Filipino in undercard: Gorres now fighting Colombia's Hurtado

GORRES

IT'S FINAL: Cebu's Z "The Dream" Gorres, the No. 1-ranked Oriental and Pacific Boxing Federation super flyweight, will see action in the Pacquiao-Morales undercard.

But Gorres, handled by lawyer-sportsman Rudy Salud, will instead be facing a new foe after Mexican Felix Flores Murillo has been replaced at the last minute.

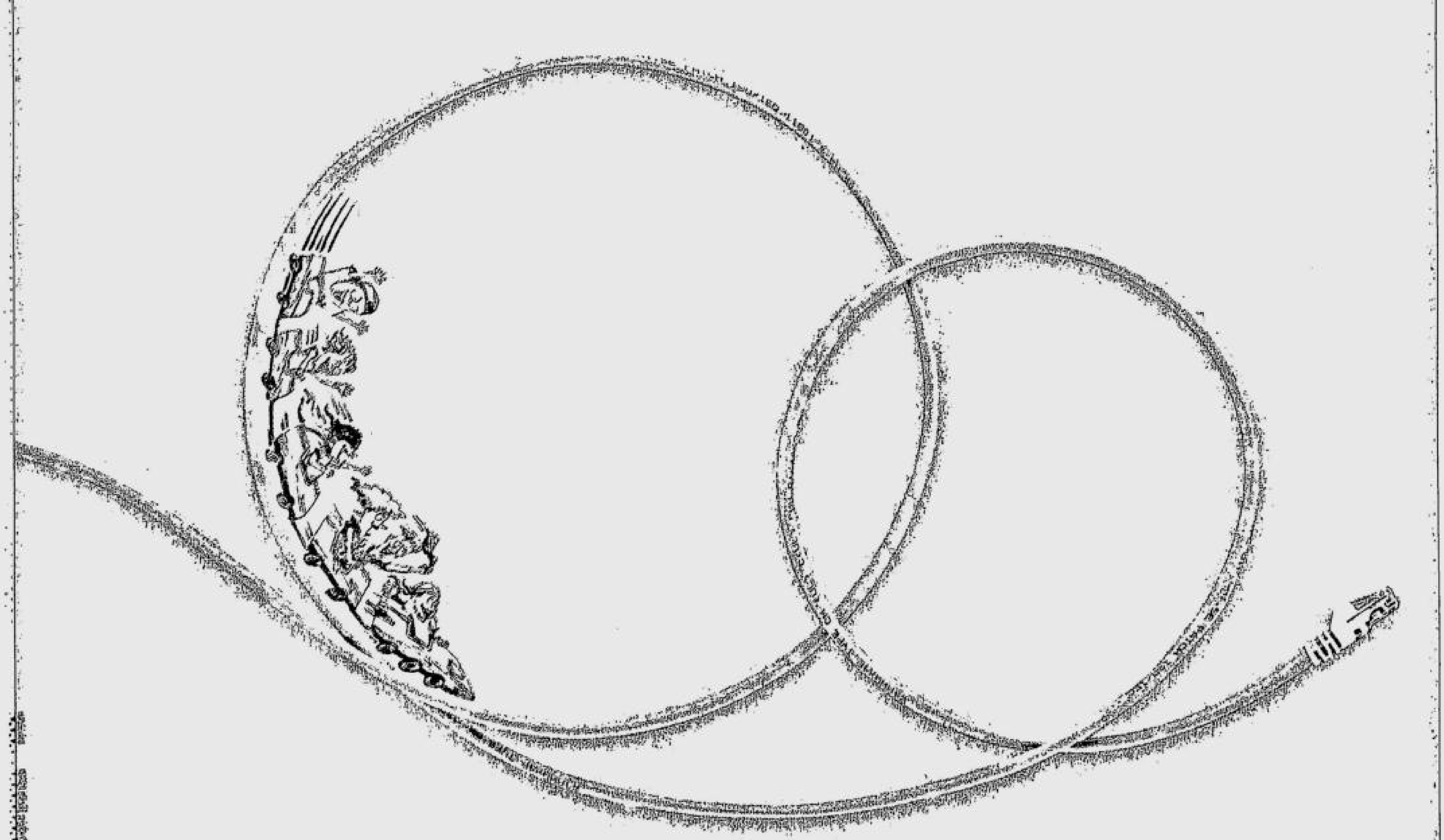
Gorres is slated to fight Colombian Reynaldo Hurtado who lost to former WBC super flyweight champion Gerry Peñalosa in an NABF title fight in Biloxi, Mississippi.

Hurtado's record is 36-6-1 with 27 KOs.

Gorres who has been training at the gym of 2002 "Trainer of the Year" Buddy McGirt in Orlando, Florida, was initially scheduled to fight Jose Navarro, a former US Olympian.

Navarro backed out to avoid risking a mandatory shot at the title against the winner of the rematch between champion Katsushige Kawashima and ex-champ Masamori Tokuyama.

Meanwhile, there were reports that Salud may no longer be able to attend the Pacquiao-Morales card. *Recah Trinidad*



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TCC INVITATIONAL

Rejuvenated Casas ready to shine again

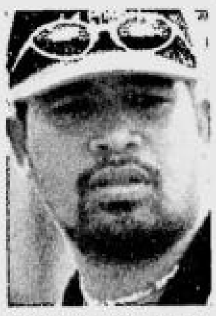
By Musong R. Castillo

CANLUBANG, Laguna—Cassius Casas swears he has gotten over a series of personal problems, an arduous period that ended in July last year.

Now he's playing the best golf of his life.

"I feel I can take on anyone," Casas said in Filipino, shortly before teeing off for a morning practice round at The Country Club here yesterday. "I am very relaxed and hitting the ball solid."

"That period in my life is over. It's time to start rebuilding my career," added the former Philippine Open champion.



CASAS: In the hunt

Casas is one of 40 select pros teeing off tomorrow in the TCC Invitational, the richest event on the local calendar after the Open.

He won the inaugural edition in 2003 but missed the cut by a mile when he failed to break 85 in each of the first two rounds last year. It was basically the story of his season in which his swing deteriorated and his mind wandered away from golf.

Cassius rededicated himself to the game in the middle of last year, plunging into a serious training regimen that includes weight training and roadwork.

A victory in the first Strong Republic Nautical Highway Super Golf Tour announced his return to peak form.

Casas also earned a spot in the Asian PGA Tour after finishing 15th in qualifying.

Tony Lascuña is the TCC's defending champion and Casas sees himself playing in the final two-rounds, at the very least.

"The top names will all come prepared," said Casas. "As for me, I'll surely do better than last year."

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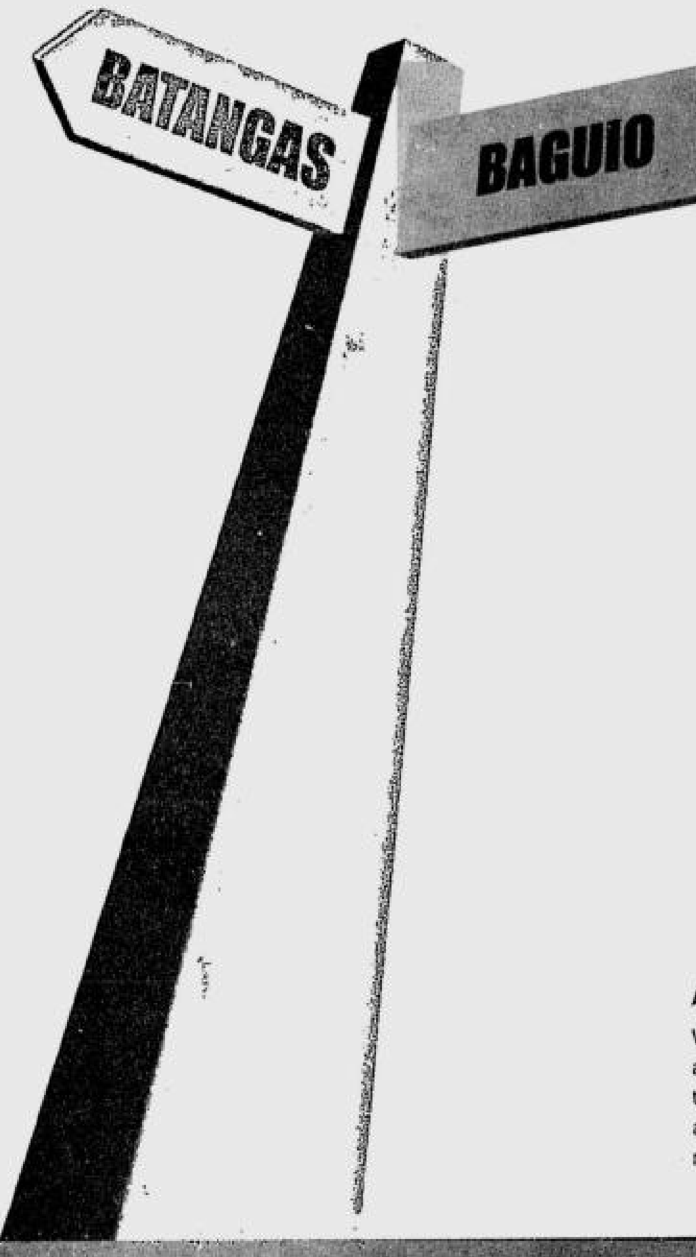

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	Semi-Finals match 7	6:00pm
	Semi-Finals match 8	8:00pm
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GAMES TODAY
(Ynares Center)
4:45 p.m.—FedEx vs Shell
7:35 p.m.—Purefoods vs Coca-Cola

"We realized imports can't win games alone," said Shell coach Leo Austria after the Turbochargers zapped the Purefoods TJ Hotdogs, 80-68, anchored on local help.

Austria and the Turbochargers leaned on Wesley Wilson's 39-point output during their conference debut but were outclassed by the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals' balanced offensive attack.

"Wesley filled the slot that we need. But the local players have to share the load and not ask too much from the import," said Austria, expecting that Tony Dela Cruz, Billy Mamaril, Roger Yap, Chris Calaguio and Ronald Tubid will again be up to the task against the Express in the game that starts at 4:45 p.m.

Sporting an identical 1-1 record together with the Turbo Chargers, the Express also have a do-it-all import that complements with the homegrown players.

The 6-foot-10 Anthony Miller has been combining forces splendidly with Renren Ritualo, Gary David, Egay Billones, Ranidel 'De Ocampo and Wesley Gonzales. Still, the Express have to perfect the art of keeping their composure down the stretch just like what they did against the Red Bull Barako last week.

That 109-104 win over the Barako came after the Express blew double-digit leads against the Hotdogs.

"We can face any team at any given time," said FedEx coach Bong Ramos. "What we lack is the finishing kick needed in the endgame."

The TJ Hotdogs try to bounce back from that Shell loss when they face the Coca-Cola Tigers, who are coming off a 77-88 loss to the San Miguel Beermen, in the second game at 7:35 p.m.

DANNY Seigle, the San Miguel offensive dynamo, tries to drive through the heart of the Red Bull defense in their game Sunday. The Barako defeated the Beermen, 94-90. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Coca-Cola's Jaja Richards clashes head-on with Antonio Smith of Purefoods in the paint, the decisive area where both teams have been struggling to earn a living.

Kerby Raymundo and Jun Limpot man the Purefoods slot, while Poch Juinio, Rafi Reavis and Ali Peek patrol the lanes for the Tigers. *June Navarro*

Austere 2005 SEA Games launched

From page A25

committee announced it has generated a P640-million commitment from the government and private sponsors, half its target budget of P1.2 billion.

"Our budget is, in fact, just five percent of what Vietnam had (in its hosting of the 2003 SEAG)," noted Pagdanganan. "We were able to bring down the cost because the venues that we tapped all over the country only needed minimal repairs."

Marketing timetable

Although no major sponsor was officially unveiled during the launch, Philsoc disclosed the timetable of its marketing program.

The first tranche, which included the P640-million commitment bared yesterday, will be finalized by mid-April.

Sponsorship packages worth P300 million is expected to come in during the second tranche by mid-June, while another P300 million is targeted for the third tranche by mid-August.

Pagdanganan mentioned corporate giants Unilever, Samsung Korea, Yonex and adidas as the other sponsors joining Globe Telecoms.

Pete Cura, Philsoc marketing committee head, clarified that there will be "no cash out" deal with Samsung Korea but it will provide the Games' General Information System (GIS), which is worth $5 million.

The GIS, which will be installed in all the 41 venues, will collate and report all game results coming from the different venues in real time. The system will also provide personal, historical and game statistics.

Prior to the Games, the GIS will also process, integrate and manage information on team registrations, billeting of athletes and officials, links on volunteer network and support crew, the official website and other services.

But Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, Philippine Olympic Committee president and Philsoc vice chair, stressed that the organizers have a long way to go.

More problems

"There will still be a lot of obstacles," said Cojuangco. "There will be more problems for sure. Although many people think that we can't do it, we can show that this can push through."

First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, who spearheaded the financing of the athletes' training through the FG Foundation, sounded more optimistic.

"We're already prepared," declared Arroyo. "With all the volunteers, the Filipinos will do very well. Our athletes will also train well."

Government officials, headed by Sen. Richard Gordon and Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr., and the leaders of the 41 National Sports Associations also graced the launch.

Santillan leaves for Tokyo fight

ORIENTAL and Pacific Boxing Federation welterweight champ Rev Santillan leaves for Tokyo today as he prepares to defend his title against Japanese Kazuhiko Hidaka at the Korakuen Hall.

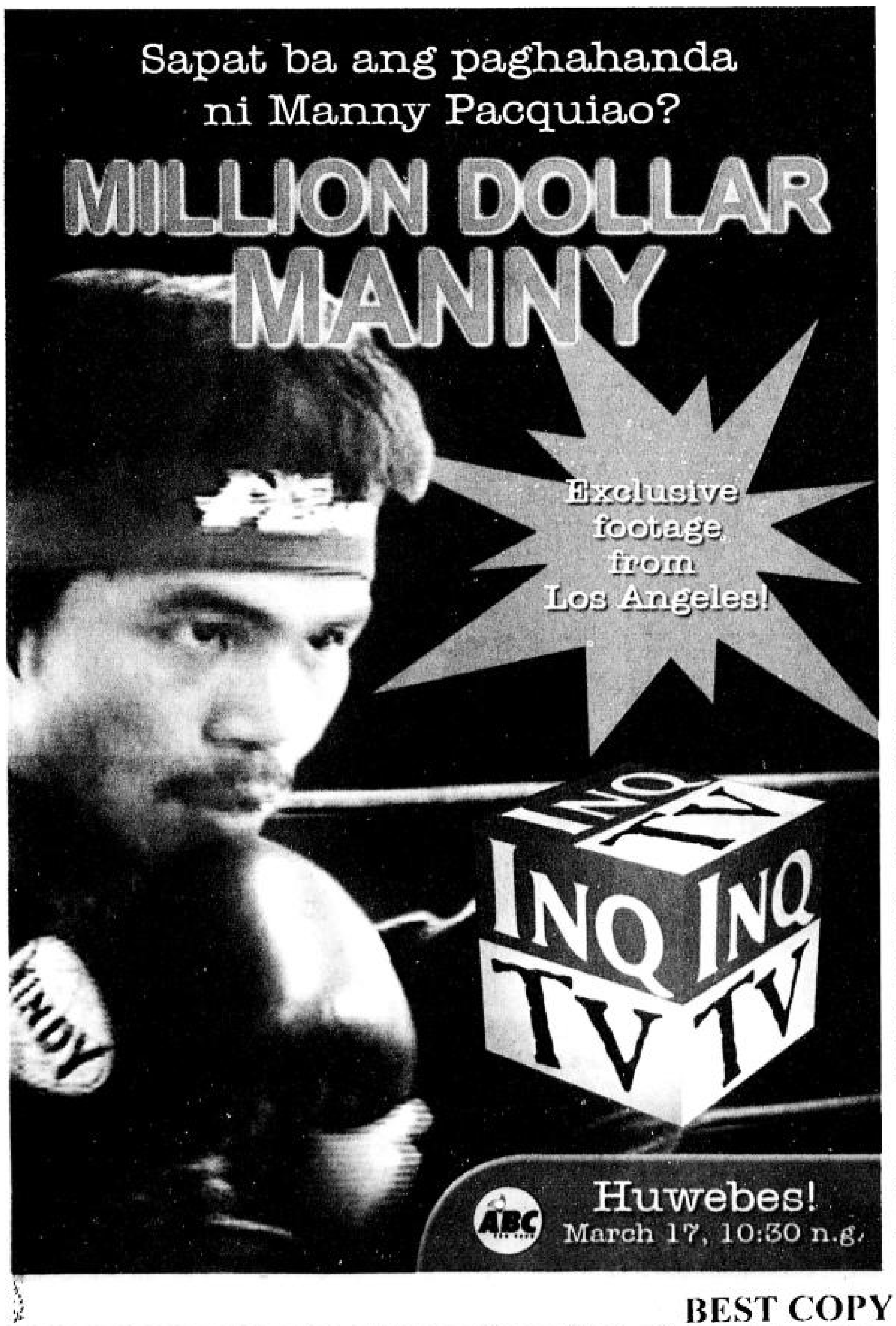
It is a fight that will be obscured by Manny Pacquiao's blockbuster battle against Erik "El Terible" Morales, never mind if it actually takes place a day earlier due to the time difference of the two venues.

Still, it is an important match as the Iloilo-raised power-puncher hopes to usher in a big weekend for Filipino fight fans.

The 26-year-old Santillan (21-1-1, 15 KO's) will be accompanied by trainer Brix Flores, Filipino fight judge Alex Vidal, and boxer Cesar Yarte.

"I promise to defend my title at all cost," said the 5-foot-11 boxer. "I hope the Filipinos will be victorious, including everybody's idol Manny Pacquiao."

Hidaka is on a five-bout winning streak since his failed attempt at a Japanese title in 2003. *Salven Lagumbay, contributor*


Sapat ba ang paghahanda ni Manny Pacquiao?
MILLION DOLLAR MANNY
Exclusive footage from Los Angeles!
INQ TV
Huwebes!
March 17, 10:30 n.g.
ABC

Samboy, Alvarez beef up P'ñaque Jets in NBC caging

LIM

ALVAREZ

TWO former PBA stars—Samboy Lim and Bong Alavarez—will be back in action soon as they spearhead Vice Mayor Anjo Yllana's Parañaque Jets in the NBC (National Basketball Conference) national championship which unwraps on April 15 in Baguio City and Cagayan de Oro City.

Yllana, a popular actor-television host, finalized the Jets' lineup in the BAP-sanctioned tournament in a recent meeting with NBC secretary general Tito Palma.

Also playing for Parañaque are actors Richard Gomez, Jomari Yllana, Ozamiz City's Rolly Basilides, Ardin Guiyab and PMI Admirals Larry Rodriguez and Niño Marquez.

Coach Jun de Jose has scheduled tryouts on Friday and Saturday at the Olivarez gym to select other players. He may be contacted at 0919-8127609.

"Our participation will kick off our city's intense basketball development program," said Yllana. "We feel the NBC will also give us a good opportunity to promote our city.

NBC president and national shooting champion Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla welcomed the entry of Parañaque. "The Jets will definitely help boost our campaign to promote basketball throughout the country," said Padilla.

SHELL SUPERKARTING

Bumgarner takes 1st leg

MICHELE Bumgarner (second from left) raises her trophy after topping the ICE Open class. With her are (from left) Matteo Guidicelli, runner-up Indy Villalon and third placer Arvin Drueco.

CARMONA, Cavite—Asian karting queen Michele Bumgarner of M&M Racing overcame the challenge of fierce rival Matteo Guidicelli in the final stretch to rule the kick-off leg of the 2005 Shell Superkarting Series over the weekend at the Carmona Circuit Philippines here.

The victory was hard-earned for Bumgarner, who switched turns at the front with Guidicelli of Cebu Racing Group three times in the ICA Open class. She finished the 20-lap race in 16:05.706, just 0.790 seconds ahead of runner-up Indy Villalon of Birel-Fila.

Comebacking Arvin Drueco took third place with a time of 16:16.067, while Guidicelli, who posted the fastest lap time of 42.652 seconds, wound up fourth, his bid thwarted by a slight brush with Bumgarner's Intrepid Kart as they dueled for top honors in the final straight.

Pablo Eslao and Jean Marcelo shared the limelight with Bumgarner in the races sanctioned by the Automobile Association of the Philippines and sponsored by Pilipinas Shell, Denso Iridium Power, Bridgestone by Phil. Allied Ent. Corp., DMCI Homes, Eastway Motorcycle Racing and Aviva Insurance.

Eslao topped the KT Light division over actor Onemig Bondoc and Jeje Villena, while Marcelo prevailed over Raymond Bustamante and Santiago Garcia in the Formula Rotax Novice class.

The win was a big one for Bumgarner, backed by Samsung, Oakley, Malaysia Airlines, Intrepid Karts, Tillett Racing Seats and Standard Insurance, who was continually bogged down by engine gremlins in last year's series won by Guidicelli.

The second leg of the seven-round series will be staged at the Boomland Kart Track of the CCP complex on April 2 and 3.

Corteza remains unbeaten

LEE VANN Corteza and Carlo Biado bested separate opponents yesterday to barge into the semifinals of the San Miguel Beer (SMB) Asian 9-Ball Tour qualifier at the Bowling Inn.

Corteza, who turned 26 on March 1, subdued Roberto Gomez, 7-5, while Biado nipped Dodong Didal, 7-6.

Corteza will battle snooker artist Benjamin Guevarra, while Biado will tackle Gomez today, with the winners advancing to the Jakarta leg of the Asian 9-Ball Tour next month. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Wade, Shaq shine as Heat fry Bucks

MIAMI—Dwyane Wade scored 29 points on 10-of-12 shooting, Shaquille O'Neal added 21 points and the Miami Heat beat Milwaukee, 110-71, on Monday night to move into a virtual tie with Phoenix and San Antonio for the NBA's best record.

It was the largest victory margin of the season for Miami (49-16), which has won nine straight overall and 13 in a row at home. Phoenix and San Antonio are both 48-15.

Miami has held leads of at least 17 points in each of its last eight games, and has won its last nine by an average of 17.6 points.

Damon Jones added 15 points for Miami. Michael Redd had 14 points for Milwaukee, which lost for the eighth time in its last 10 road games. In Atlanta, Tayshaun Prince scored a career-high 31 points, and the Detroit Pistons bounced back from the lowest-scoring game in franchise history with a 114-108 overtime victory over the Hawks.

Rasheed Wallace added a season-best 28 points for the Pistons, who failed to make a field goal in the fourth quarter Sunday night in a 64-62 victory over Utah.

Atlanta's Tom Gugliotta hit a 3-pointer with 6.4 seconds left in the fourth quarter to send the game to overtime. The Hawks lost for the 15th time in 16 games despite Al Harrington's season-high 37 points.

Detroit played without coach Larry Brown, who underwent additional surgery Monday on an ailing hip. He already missed six games in November for the first operation.

In Washington, Larry Hughes had 21 points and 12 rebounds and Gilbert Arenas scored 21 points to help the Wizards sweep the season series from the Los Angeles Lakers for the first time in franchise history with a 95-81 rout.

SHAQUILLE O' Neal highlights Miami's dominance with a slam. AP

Brendan Haywood added 16 points for the Wizards, overtime winners over the Lakers in the teams' first meeting of the season in Los Angeles.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Raef LaFrentz and Antoine Walker combined to hit three 3-pointers in the final 1:32 to lead the Boston Celtics to a 119-110 victory over the Bobcats.

Walker finished with 25 points to lead the Celtics to their fourth straight victory and a four-game season sweep of the Bobcats. Boston has won eight of nine games since reacquiring Walker in a trade with Atlanta last month.

Ricky Davis led the Celtics with 27 points, and LaFrentz and Paul Pierce added 15 each.

In San Antonio, Tim Duncan had 18 points and 13 rebounds for the Spurs after missing two games because of a sprained right ankle and tightness in his back and helped his team crush the Charlotte Hornets, 112-89.

While Duncan returned, point guard Tony Parker missed his first game of the season because of a quadriceps injury, and Manu Ginobili sat out with a groin injury.

Beno Udrih, a 22-year-old rookie from Slovenia, scored a career-high 25 points on 9-of-13 shooting in his first career start in place of Parker.

In Memphis, Tennessee, Mike Miller scored 27 points, and Lorenzen Wright had 19 points and nine rebounds for the Grizzlies, who dumped the Portland Trail Blazers, 104-83.

Earl Watson added 16 points and seven assists for Memphis, which dropped an 80-66 decision to the Trail Blazers on Saturday in Portland.

In Oakland, California, Tracy McGrady had 20 points, seven rebounds and four assists, and the Houston Rockets wrapped up a four-game West Coast swing with its fifth straight victory, a 97-94 thriller over the Golden State Warriors.

Juwan Howard added 18 points and seven rebounds before leaving with a sprained right knee with 9:18 left in the fourth quarter. *AP*

Roddick, Davenport blow away opponents

INDIAN WELLS, California—Overcoming gusty winds that sent sand swirling around the court Monday, Lindsay Davenport beat Meghann Shaughnessy in the Pacific Life Open.

DAVENPORT

No. 1 Davenport bounced back after losing the second set and came away with a 6-2, 2-6, 6-2 victory to move into the quarterfinals.

When the wind died down a bit later in the afternoon, it was Andy Roddick who breezed. He needed only 45 minutes for a 6-1, 6-2 victory over Jiri Novak of the Czech Republic.

Asked if he had ever won a match in 45 minutes, Roddick replied, "Yes."

When?

"I think I was 10," he said, smiling.

"It was easier than I expected," Roddick said. "I don't think you ever expect to win a match out here in a Masters Series event 1-2. I don't think he ever found his rhythm out there."

Andre Agassi also rolled into the fourth round, beating Romania's Andrei Pavel, 6-3, 6-4. Agassi, who turns 35 next month, was the 2001 Indian Wells champion and a finalist in 1990 and 1995.

Maria Sharapova was a 6-2, 6-3 winner over Dinara Safina in a match of Russian teenagers. Wimbledon champion Sharapova, 17, is ranked No. 3. Safina, 18, is No. 37.

"After the points went a little longer, then the wind died down, I thought I was more consistent," said Sharapova.

Davenport obviously didn't like the conditions, with gusts of 30-40 mph (48-64 kph) that kicked sand into the air and left a thin layer of grit on the court.

"It's no fun to play like that," she said. "It makes for pretty awful tennis." *AP*

SPORTSWATCH

Tatap national pool ranking set

THE TABLE tennis men's and women's national pool of athletes will start their first monthly ranking on March 18-19 at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium. Ten men and 10 women athletes will fight it out via a round-robin system to select the five slots of athletes for men and women which will represent the country in the 23rd SEA Games slated Dec. 1-3 at the PSC Badminton Hall. All table tennis enthusiasts are free to attend.

MILO-BEST VOLLEYBALL: The Milo BEST Women's Volleyball League capped its season with a four-game championship finale featuring developmental and competitive categories in both elementary and high school at the San Beda College gym. Karissa Abela, from losing finalist St. Mary's College, gets her trophy as best spiker in the high school developmental division from Milo Sports executive Pat Goc-Ong. With them are guest Lydia de Vega-Mercado and WVL organizer Nic Jorge.

GCAP championship on tonight

THE CHAMPIONSHIP round of the Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP) 7-Cock Derby unfolds tonight at the air-conditioned Las Piñas Coliseum. The winners stand to receive a guaranteed prize of P700,000. Among the favorites are the entries of Tony Lasala, Melchor Caluag, Pol Estrellado and Boy Royo, *sabong* idol Patrick Antonio, Boyet Legazpi and Bobbit Pies, Pepito Ngo, Gerry Ramos, Art de Castro, and Mayor Nene Aguilar. The event is sponsored by Sagupaan Complexor 3000. Meanwhile, regular hackfights are also staged at LPC from Monday to Sunday, according to coliseum manager Alex Tobias. Every Thursday, the No Entry Fee Fastest Win One-Cock Ulutan is being held with P10,000 at stake. For inquiries, call 8743910 and 8731040.

One-Cock Ulutan resumes

THE SECOND batch of participants will compete in Pasay City Cockpit's Superfights II Fastest Win One-Cock Ulutan starting at 7 a.m. today. About 200 new entries are expected to vie for the P1.1 million guaranteed prize, according to pit managers Eric dela Rosa and Butchoy Olano. The opening round last Monday attracted a total of P250 entries, with the fastest winning time registered at 14.25 seconds. The first 10 winners today will get a Nokia 2100 each and the last five winners, one 21-inch-color TV each. Sponsors are Sagupaan Complexor 3000, Sagupaan B-50 Forten and Sagupaan Mite Free. Meanwhile, three entries topped the Mikko Fatman 6-Cock Derby last week: Bacolor Gold I of engineer Efren Canlas, Winning Time Jobo of Rudy Salud and Lito Orillaza and Big Eyes of Ramon Mancenares. Likewise, the big-time 5-cock derby of Boy Royo and Pol Estrellado blasts off this Friday. For inquiries, call 843-1890, 843-1746 and 816-6750.

RACING TIPS

AT SANTA ANA BY MR. 999

Race 1--1. Jonny Lou 2. Ravensowrth 3. Maximus 4. Magic Ewan Ko
Race 2--1. Legally Blonde 2. Parrot Moe 3. Bunker Buster 4. Native Prince
Race 3--1. C'est Moi 2. Half Medium 3. He's A Balong/All Powerful 4. I Don't Dance 5. Silent Operatror
Race 4--1. Wrecking Ball 2. Wynona Raider 3. Ginja 4. Cool Clay
Race 5--1. King Foppy 2. Unrivaled 3. Mercurian 4. Sir Pierre 5. Dashing
Race 6--1. Real Material 2. Rebound 3. Lumiere 4. Playing Cool
Race 7--1. Perky Perp/Strong Red 2. Top of D Line 3. Little Girl 4. Friendly Venture 5. Golden Lance
Race 8--1. Stradivarius 2. Pulilan Beauty 3. Blue Sheikh 4. Mas Que Nada 5. Silver Cho Cho 6. Top Quest

Spring splits series vs CDO

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—Spring Cooking Oil-backed Laguna Spring crushed the Cagayan de Oro Stars, 101-78, Sunday to split their two-game National Basketball Conference-Sulpicio Lines preseason series at the Asian College of Science and Technology gym here.

The Spring cagers of NBC president Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla and Laguna Gov. Teresita "Ningning" Lazaro were razor-sharp from start to finish, leading by as many as 27 points, as they came back from a 93-98 upset loss to the Stars the night before.

Spring finished its four-game series with expansion team Valencia and CdO at 2-2.

Jhayson Alminario and Mar Reyes combined for 37 points to power Spring to victory.

"I challenged my players to come out with their true form," said Spring coach Vic "Rambo" Sanchez. "This series revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the team. I will work on them when we get back to Laguna."

Last Saturday, Spring led 28-24 and 53-44 in the first two quarters, but faltered in the homestretch to lose by five.

Foreign riders here for Asia motocross

THE BULK of foreign delegations are arriving today in time for the 2005 Motocross Masters of Asia FIM-Puerto Princesa International Motocross Championship set March 19-20 at the motocross racetrack near the Puerto Princesa City Hall.

Joining the chase for the centerpiece 125 cc crown are Team Pertamina Indonesia which will be fielding standouts Aep Dadang, Deny Orlando and Aldi Lazaroni;, Team Red Bull Thailand led by Chaiyan Romphan; Team Oakley Australia bannered by "Awesome Aussie" Christian Horwood and the explosive Kiwi rider James Robinson of Team Dickies Subway.

Leading the local charge are Caltex-Revtex rider and 2003 Asian motocross champion Glenn Aguilar, who's eager to reclaim his crown, and 2004 FIM Asian Motocross champion Tadakazu Otsuka.

Arthur Valdez, the FIM-trained and accredited vice president of the organizing National Motorcycle Safety and Sports Association (Namssa), gave his approval following the final inspection of the racetrack.

The event is sponsored by the City of Puerto Princesa, the Philippine Olympic Committee, the Philippine Sports Commission, the Department of Tourism, Cebu Pacific, Negros Navigation, Dickies; 2Go Aboitiz, HJC Helmets, Oakley, Highland Products, yehey.com, motorcyclephilippines.com, Inside Racing, Broadband Philippines, Dusit Hotel, Hotel Asturias, Sports Plus, Caltex Revtex, Asian Spirit and GCG Pipes.

Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn expects the event to further generate interest in the already popular motorcycle sport in the province.

Sports Plus cable channel will telecast the highlights of the 2004 FIM Asian Series from 7-8 p.m. to usher in this weekend's event.

For details, e-mail namssa01@hotmail.com or call 0917-8992363.

Village meets slated

THE ALLIANCE of Quezon City Homeowners Association Incorporated (AQCHAI) will stage two big sports events—the 3rd AQCHAI Inter-Village Golf Tournament and the 10th AQCHAI Inter-Village Basketball League—this summer.

The Inter-Village golfest is set March 18 at the Veterans Memorial Golf Course in Quezon City to be participated in by AQCHAI members.

The 10th AQCHAI Inter-Village Basketball Tournament, on the other hand, has drawn over 70 member subdivisions. For details, call 0917-8384642, 932-9384 or 0919-2704582.

Epson field grows bigger

EPSON CUP 2 easily surpassed the number of participants during its inaugural staging after holding a pair of leveling sessions last week.

Epson marketing manager Randy Kanapi said at least 300 badminton players trooped to the Pioneer Badminton Center in Mandaluyong over the weekend.

"So far, it has equaled the total number of participants during the first Epson Cup," said tournament chair Edmin Tarriela.

Organizers expect the number to swell with another pair of leveling schedules slated on March 19 and 20 for the event sponsored by the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Shell, Wilson, Citibank, Apple Center, Konica (Photo Columbia), Mizuno, UNO Magazine, Magic 89.9, 99.5 RT, Yehey.com, PBNet and Fitness First.

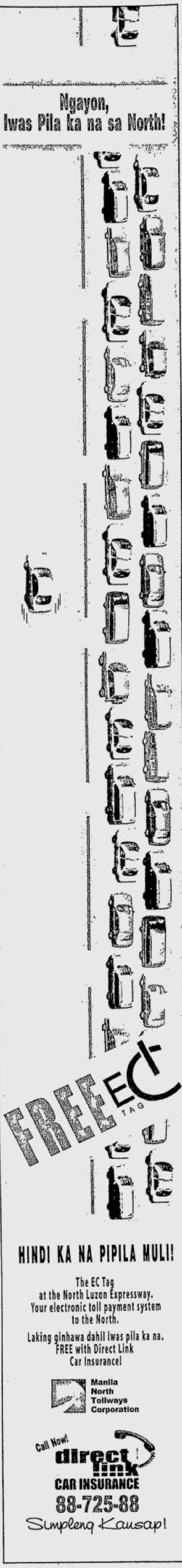
The inaugural season of the Epson Cup drew more than 300 players, including show business personalities and other celebrities.

Sanctioned by the Philippine Badminton Association, Epson Cup 2 will be held on April 9-17, with qualifying rounds at the Olympic Badminton Club in Libis, Quezon City.

The semifinals and finals of the nine-day event, which allows participants from all walks of life except former national team players, will be held at the Greenhills Badminton Center in San Juan.

Registration fee is pegged at P500.

For inquiries, call 6385343, 7460828.



Ngayon,
Iwas Pila ka na sa North!

HINDI KA NA PIPILA MULI!

The EC Tag
at the North Luzon Expressway.
Your electronic toll payment system
to the North.

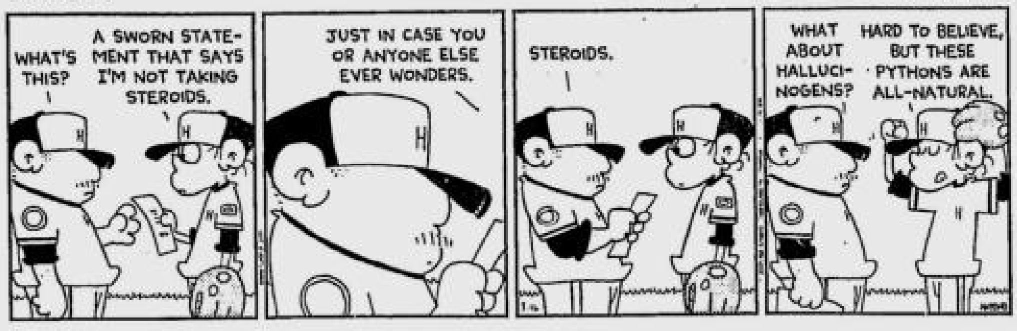
Laking ginhawa dahil iwas pila ka na.
FREE with Direct Link
Car Insurance!

Manila
North
Tollways
Corporation

Call Now!
direct link
CAR INSURANCE
88-725-88
Simpleng Kausap!

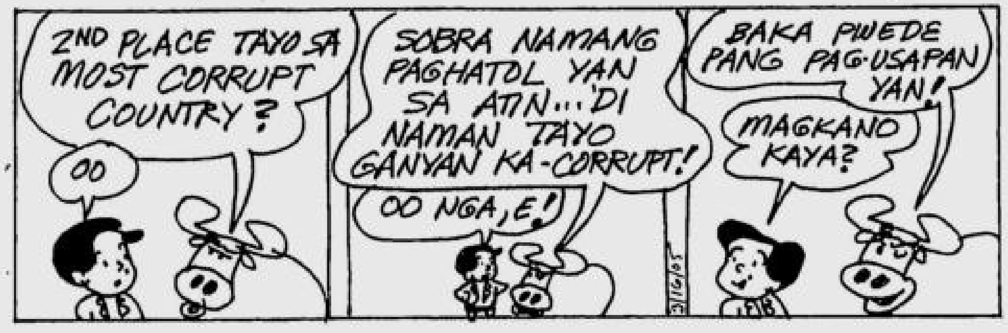
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


WHAT'S THIS?
A SWORN STATEMENT THAT SAYS I'M NOT TAKING STEROIDS.
JUST IN CASE YOU OR ANYONE ELSE EVER WONDERS.
STEROIDS.
WHAT ABOUT HALLUCINOGENS?
HARD TO BELIEVE, BUT THESE PYTHONS ARE ALL-NATURAL.

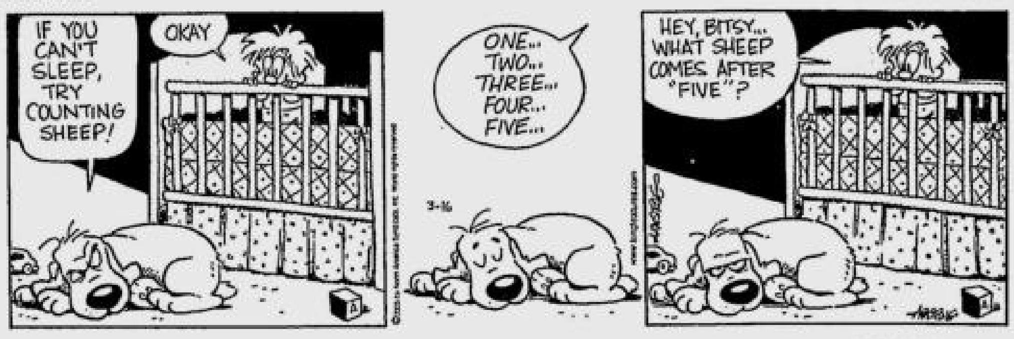
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


2ND PLACE TAYO SA MOST CORRUPT COUNTRY?
OO
SOBRA NAMANG PAGHATOL YAN SA ATIN... 'DI NAMAN TAYO GANYAN KA-CORRUPT!
OO NGA, E!
BAKA PWEDE PANG PAG-USAPAN YAN!
MAGKANO KAYA?
3/16/05

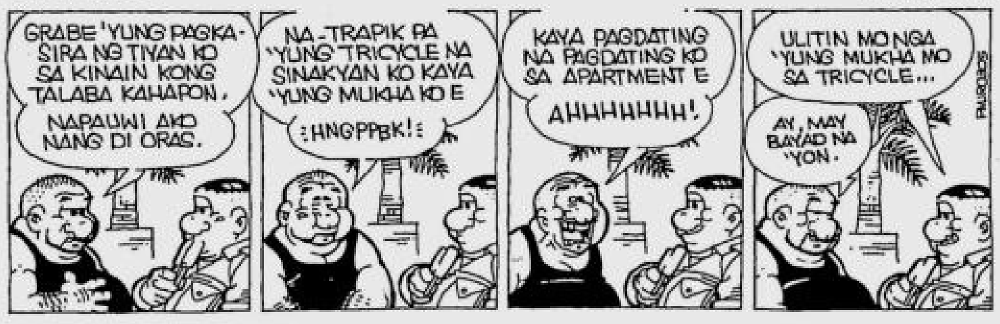
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


IF YOU CAN'T SLEEP, TRY COUNTING SHEEP!
OKAY
ONE... TWO... THREE... FOUR... FIVE...
HEY, BITSY... WHAT SHEEP COMES AFTER "FIVE"?
3-16

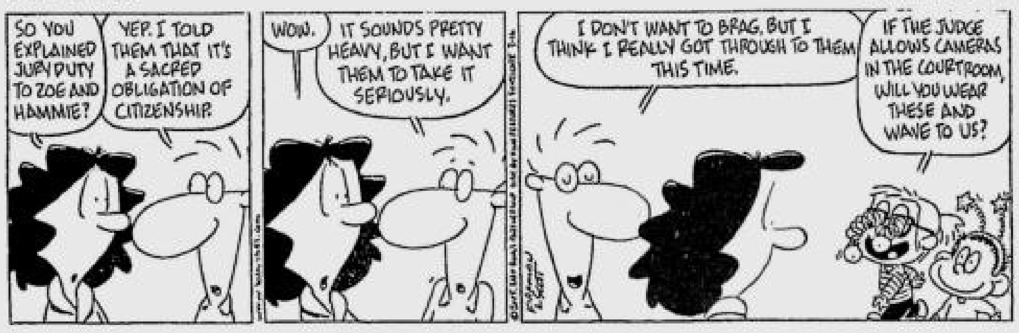
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


GRABE 'YUNG PAGKASIRA NG TIYAN KO SA KINAIN KONG TALABA KAHAPON,
NAPAUWI AKO NANG DI ORAS.
NA-TRAPIK PA 'YUNG TRICYCLE NA SINAKYAN KO KAYA 'YUNG MUKHA KO E
:HNGPPBK!:
KAYA PAGDATING NA PAGDATING KO SA APARTMENT E
AHHHHHHH!
ULITIN MO NGA 'YUNG MUKHA MO SA TRICYCLE...
AY, MAY BAYAD NA 'YON.

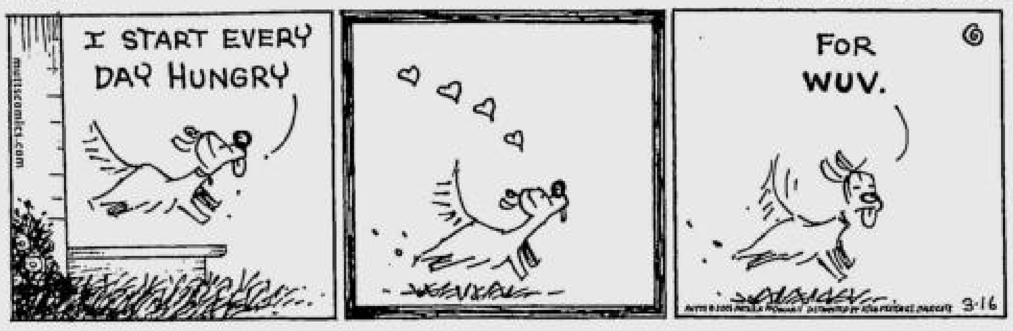
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


SO YOU EXPLAINED JURY DUTY TO ZOE AND HAMMIE?
YEP. I TOLD THEM THAT IT'S A SACRED OBLIGATION OF CITIZENSHIP.
WOW.
IT SOUNDS PRETTY HEAVY, BUT I WANT THEM TO TAKE IT SERIOUSLY.
I DON'T WANT TO BRAG, BUT I THINK I REALLY GOT THROUGH TO THEM THIS TIME.
IF THE JUDGE ALLOWS CAMERAS IN THE COURTROOM, WILL YOU WEAR THESE AND WAVE TO US?

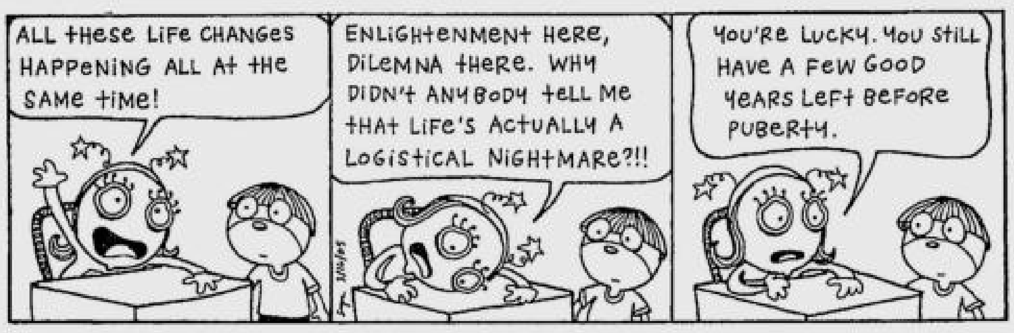
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


I START EVERY DAY HUNGRY
FOR WUV.
3-16

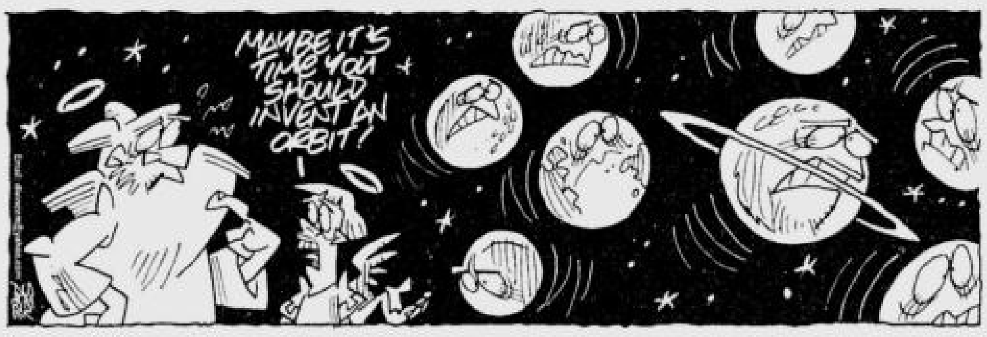
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


ALL these Life CHANGES HAPPENING ALL At the SAME time!
ENLightenment Here, DiLEMNA there. WHY DIDN't ANYBODY tell Me that Life's ActuALLY A Logistical NightMARE?!!
You're Lucky. You still Have A Few Good years Left Before Puberty.

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


MAYBE IT'S TIME YOU SHOULD INVENT AN ORBIT?

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have a wonderful imagination. However, not only are you inspirational, you're highly practical as well. You are self-assured and appear confident to others (regardless of how you personally feel). You know how to combine the best of things to create a new product. The year ahead might be one of the best years of your life. **Birthdate of:** Bernardo Bertolucci, director; Jerry Lewis, comedian/actor; Hollis Stacy, golf champion.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Siblings and female relatives will play an important role in your life today. You want to have a meaningful discussion with someone.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Because you identify with your possessions today, you might feel a bit possessive about something in particular. (You're not in the mood to lend out anything that you own.)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): The Moon is in your sign today and tomorrow. Something about this makes you demand more nurturing and attention from others. (That's OK. Where's the harm in this?)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Be extra-patient when dealing with women today. Your doubts and insecurities about yourself make you a bit suspicious of others. Try to relax and be friendly.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Contact with a friend is very important today. You need to have a personal discussion with someone. You want to feel you have a special link with a friend.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You might do something today that calls attention to yourself, especially from a boss, parent or VIP. Be aware of how you look, and be aware of what you do and say.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You're restless! You want to do something different, out of the ordinary. What you really want is some adventure in your life. Try to learn something new today.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You enjoy being surrounded by familiar things today. You appreciate anything that holds past memories, because you feel a bit sentimental about something today.

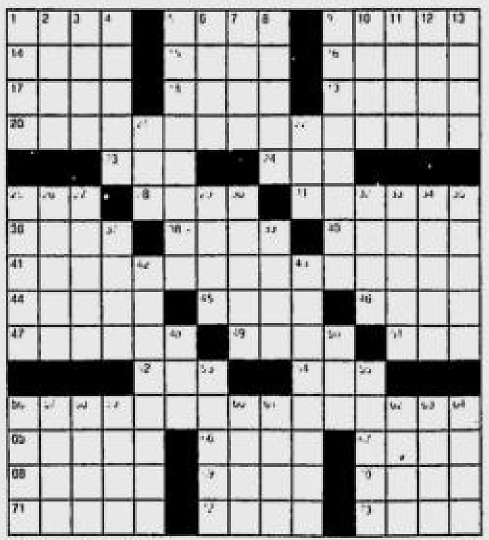
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Conflict with others will be more emotional today. In part, this is because you're having a knee-jerk reaction to things. Count to three before you speak.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is a good day for home crafts, hobbies and reorganizing your personal life. Clean out your medicine cabinet. Buy personal-hygiene items from the drugstore.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Romance has a greater emotional depth today. You want to talk to your main squeeze. You might also feel protective of children and young people.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): If you get a chance to be by yourself today, do it. You need to buffer yourself from the harsh realities of life. Today is a good time to go inside yourself and think about your attitudes and your values.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR

3/16/05

ACROSS
1 Study hastily
5 Mailbox attachment
9 Snapshot
14 Singer McEntire
15 Give a new look to
16 Varnish ingredient
17 Mimic
18 Creative flash
19 Chart stand
20 Two caps
23 Hankering
24 Min. part
25 LAPD call
28 Icelandic poem
31 Reading river
36 Last book of "The Alexandria Quartet"
38 Capp's hyena
40 "Maria __"
41 Two cops
44 Rampages
45 "My __ Lady"
46 Makes lace
47 Shenanigans
49 Scottish dagger
51 Zodiac sign
52 Guillemot's cousin
54 Container with a tap
56 Two cups
65 Book after Daniel
66 XXVII + XXVI
67 Angler's doodad
68 Vigilant
69 Writer Ferber
70 Norse VIP
71 Woodland clearing
72 Witnessed
73 Goose on Oahu

DOWN
1 Sidling crustacean
2 Finance company takeback
3 Cover for a crook
4 Singer Robbins
5 Amicable
6 Spartan queen
7 Arabian gulf
8 Prods
9 Evangelist
10 Make well
11 Greek peak
12 Cake layer
13 Simply
21 Golfer Trevino
22 Harden
25 Ghana's capital
26 No-frills
27 Fathered, old-style
29 Refusing to listen
30 Magnani and Paquin
32 Dismounted
33 Winner's token
34 Related maternally
35 Authorization
37 Pro's opponent
39 Tennis situation, for short
42 Intensify
43 Kind of slip
48 Bring to court
50 Miss the mark
53 Rote and Petty
55 Synthetic thermoplastic material
56 Uneven hairstyle
57 Usage charge
58 On the waves
59 Nudnik
60 Helper
61 Three squared
62 Kind of ranch
63 Emerald Isle
64 Philosopher Descartes

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

P	A	C	T	S	■	C	A	S	A	■	H	O	R	S
O	M	A	H	A	■	A	D	I	T	■	U	T	A	H
L	A	P	E	L	■	N	I	G	H	■	H	O	S	A
■	■	P	O	I	S	O	N	H	E	M	L	O	C	K
A	B	E	■	V	I	E	■	T	I	E	■	L	A	T
D	U	L	L	A	R	D	■	I	S	R	A	E	L	I
O	L	L	A	■	■	■	U	N	T	I	L	■	■	■
■	L	A	U	G	H	I	N	G	S	T	O	C	K	■
■	■	■	D	R	O	N	E	■	■	■	H	O	E	D
D	E	S	S	E	R	T	■	B	L	E	A	R	L	Y
A	R	T	■	E	N	E	■	R	A	G	■	A	P	E
C	R	A	C	K	E	R	B	A	R	R	E	L	■	■
H	A	L	O	■	D	A	R	N	■	E	A	S	E	L
A	T	I	T	■	I	C	E	D	■	S	C	E	N	E
S	A	N	E	■	N	T	W	T	■	S	H	A	D	E

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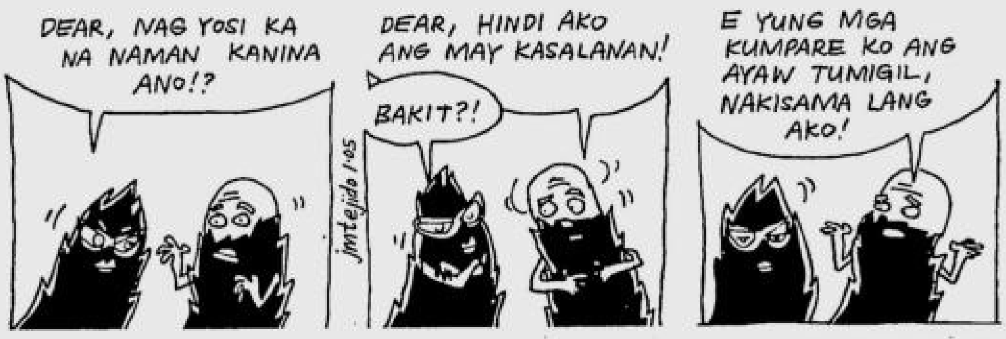
3/16/05

GASFAR
fuel saving tips
BALANCE AND ALIGN WHEELS TO SAVE FUEL
If your wheels aren't properly aligned, you actually waste gasoline since the tires produce more friction against the ground. Have your wheels aligned regularly.

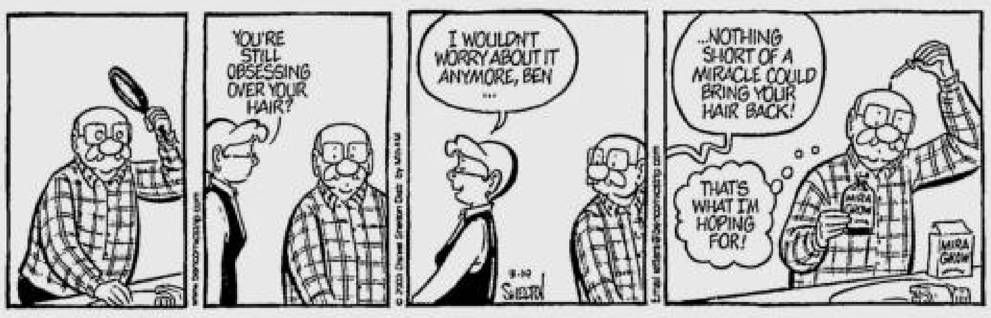
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


DEAR, NAG YOSI KA NA NAMAN KANINA ANO!?
DEAR, HINDI AKO ANG MAY KASALANAN!
BAKIT?!
E YUNG MGA KUMPARE KO ANG AYAW TUMIGIL, NAKISAMA LANG AKO!
jmtejido 1-05

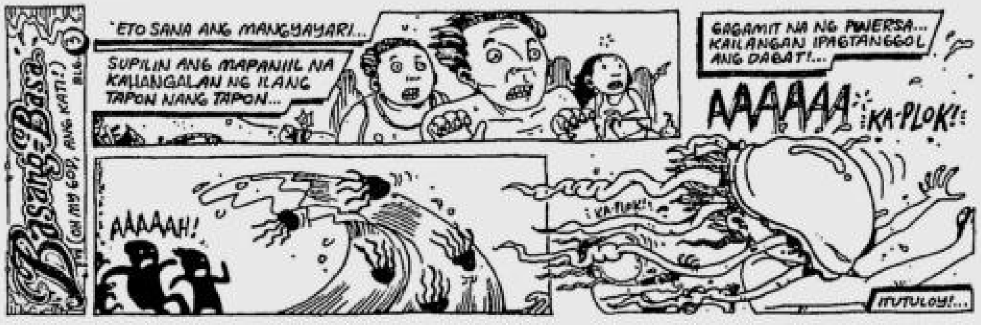
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


YOU'RE STILL OBSESSING OVER YOUR HAIR?
I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT ANYMORE, BEN ...
...NOTHING SHORT OF A MIRACLE COULD BRING YOUR HAIR BACK!
THAT'S WHAT I'M HOPING FOR!
MIRA GROW

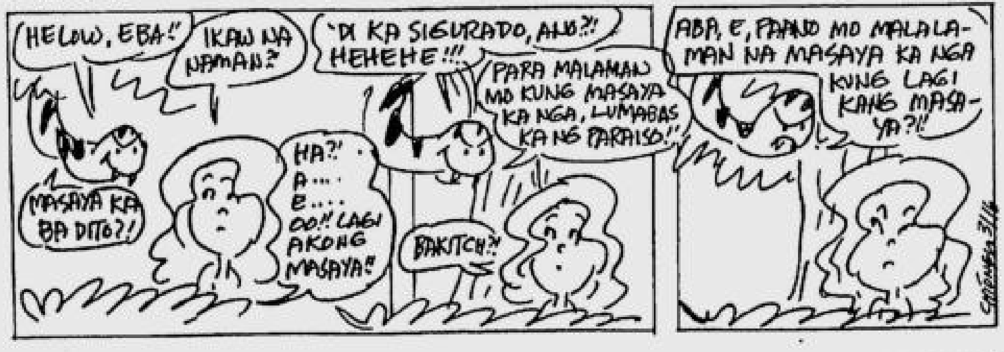
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


Basang-Basa
(OH MY GOD, ANG KATI!)
'ETO SANA ANG MANGYAYARI...
SUPILIN ANG MAPANIIL NA KAHANGALAN NG ILANG TAPON NANG TAPON...
GAGAMIT NA NG PWERSA... KAILANGAN IPAGTANGGOL ANG DAGAT!...
AAAAAA
KA-PLOK!!
AAAAAH!
KA-PLOK!!
ITUTULOY!...

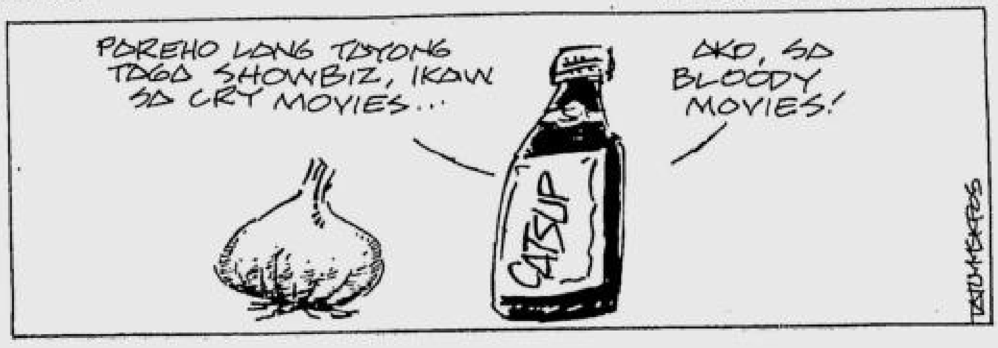
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


HELOW, EBA!
IKAW NA NAMAN?
MASAYA KA BA DITO?!
HA?! A... E.... OO!! LAGI AKONG MASAYA!!
'DI KA SIGURADO, ANO?! HEHEHE!!!
PARA MALAMAN MO KUNG MASAYA KA NGA, LUMABAS KA NG PARAISO!
BAKITCH?!
ABA, E, PAANO MO MALALAMAN NA MASAYA KA NGA KUNG LAGI KANG MASAYA?!!
3/16

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING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AKO, SA BLOODY MOVIES!
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AYALA CINEMAS THX

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THX 1 ROBOTS	1 ROBOTS	1 SPANGLISH	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 1 SPANGLISH 1:00, 3:35, 6:10, 8:45, 11:20	1 HITCH
2 HOSTAGE	2 HOSTAGE	2 HITCH	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 ROBOTS 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00, 11:00	2 ROBOTS
3 HITCH	3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 HOSTAGE 12:50, 3:15, 5:40, 8:05, 10:30	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST 2:30, 5:10, 7:50, 10:30	3 THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
4 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST	4 BAHAY NI LOLA 2	4 THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST	GUARANTEED SEATS 4 CONFIDENCE 1:05, 3:10, 5:15, 7:20, 9:25, 11:30	4 HOSTAGE
5 MILLION DOLLAR BABY		5 CURSED	GUARANTEED SEATS 5 HOSTAGE 1:35, 4:00, 6:25, 8:50, 11:25	5
		6 ROBOTS		
		7 CONFIDENCE		

GB1 GREENBELT 1
1 SPANGLISH 11:25, 2:00, 4:35, 7:10, 9:45
2 ROBOTS 11:50, 1:50, 3:50, 5:50, 7:50, 9:50

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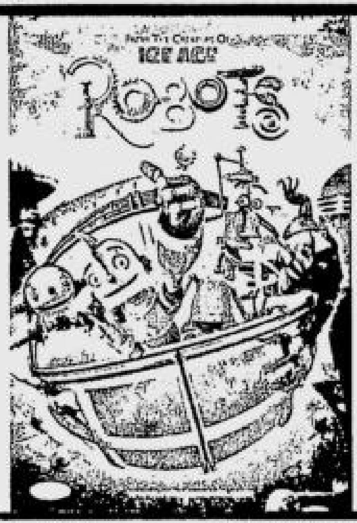
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1 HITCH • THX	6 HOSTAGE
2 ROBOTS	7 THE FINAL CUT
3 CONFIDENCE	8 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
4 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD	9 CURSED
5 BAHAY NI LOLA 2	10 PASSION OF THE CHRIST

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 ROBOTS	
2 PASSION OF THE CHRIST	5 HOSTAGE
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD	6 CURSED
4 BAHAY NI LOLA 2	7 CONFIDENCE

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 HOSTAGE	5 ROBOTS
2 CURSED	6 HITCH
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD	7 CONFIDENCE
4 PASSION OF THE CHRIST	8 BAHAY NI LOLA 2

NOVALICHES 935-3229/31

1 ROBOTS	5 BAHAY NI LOLA 2
2 HOSTAGE	6 PASSION OF THE CHRIST
3 CURSED	7 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
4 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD	8 RESERVE

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1 ROBOTS	3 HOSTAGE
2 CURSED	4 BAHAY NI LOLA 2

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2 HITCH
3 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
4 BAHAY NI LOLA 2

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3 HOSTAGE
4 PASSION OF THE CHRIST

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3 PASSION OF THE CHRIST
4 BAHAY NI LOLA 2

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6 PASSION OF THE CHRIST

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2 WITHOUT A PADDLE
3 BAHAY NI LOLA 2
4 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
5 PASSION OF THE CHRIST
6 ROBOTS

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2 HITCH
3 SON OF THE MASK 2
4 BIRHEN NG MANAOG
5 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
6 PASSION OF THE CHRIST

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

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3 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
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5 SON OF THE MASK 2
6 PASSION OF THE CHRIST

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Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

IF THE CAP FITS. Director and stylist make sure their actress is comfortable with golden wings as head band.

Darna!

It's official: Angel Locsin plays the Pinoy superheroine in GMA 7 series

By Marinel R. Cruz and Jocelyn T. Valle
Photos by Jim Guiao Punzalan

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

ANGEL Locsin is the newest Darna.

And while people behind the upcoming television series on GMA 7 have known this since December last year, die-hard Angel fans are getting their confirmation only now, here in INQUIRER Entertainment.

"There were many others who auditioned for the role of Darna," explained director Dominic Zapata during a break in the first shoot for the show's teaser. "I'm not saying no one else looked the part, but Angel was the unanimous choice."

The "others" included Karylle, Diana Zubiri, Jennylyn Mercado, Nadine Samonte, Iza Calzado, Rica Peralejo and Ara Mina.

Zapata said Angel's Darna would be "as sexy as possible." He said the heroine's reworked red-gold costume was made of latex—a mixture of waxes used for such products as balloons and medical gloves—skin-tight and sturdy.

"At the same time we made sure she'd be comfortable in it even when she did her stunts," the director said. "The action sequences in the series will be nothing like those in Hong Kong movies. 'Darna' is very Filipino. We culled influences from traditional dances, like the *tinikling*. We owe it to our culture. *Tatak* Pinoy *dapat*."

Ding, Darna's sidekick and brother, will be portrayed by "StarStruck" ultimate survivor CJ Muere. Playing the young Ding is child actor Renz Valerio.

Alessandra "Alex" de Rossi plays the villain Valentina.

Unlike Darna who's clad in a sexy two-piece, Valentina wears a snakeskin bodysuit with holes. "She doesn't have a hairpiece made of snakes," Alex volunteered. "There's only one cobra on her head. She has two snakes that she uses as whips."

"There is no bigger Pinoy character than Darna," Zapanta stressed. "And while the series will feature 'staples' like Valentina and Ding, new characters will be introduced as well. Darna will not be just a do-gooder. She will have a higher mission. This story is more compelling. Our goal is to live up to the expectations of fans and make this interesting to generations of viewers that have only heard of Darna."

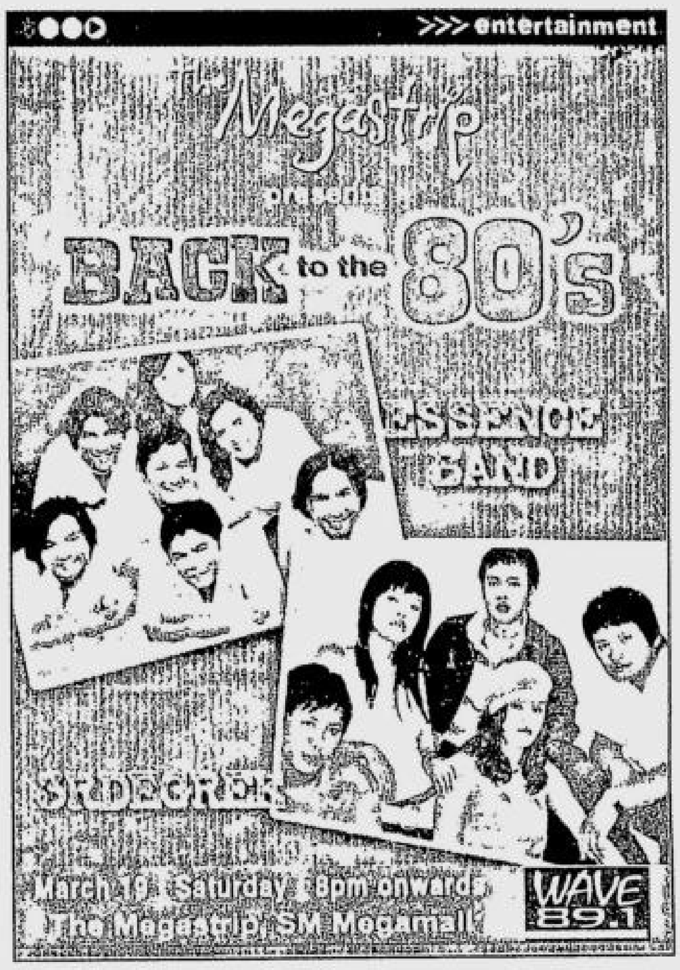
The late Mars Ravelo created the superheroine in the 1950s. "Darna" was first serialized in Pilipino comics. In May 1951, the character was brought to the big screen for the first time, with Rosa del Rosario in the lead.

Other actresses who have portrayed the role are Liza Moreno, Eva Montes, Gina Pareño, Vilma Santos, Rio Locsin, Sharon Cuneta, Anjanette Abayari and Regine Velasquez.

Last year, GMA Network Inc. bought the rights to produce "Darna: The TV Series." The pilot episode will air next month. Another "Darna" film is reportedly in the making.

INQUIRER Entertainment visited the "Darna" set one Sunday afternoon and had a chat with the cast members. Here's what the stars had to say about their characters.

DARNA/ A2-2



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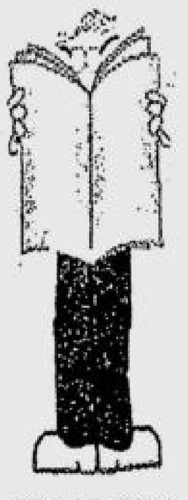
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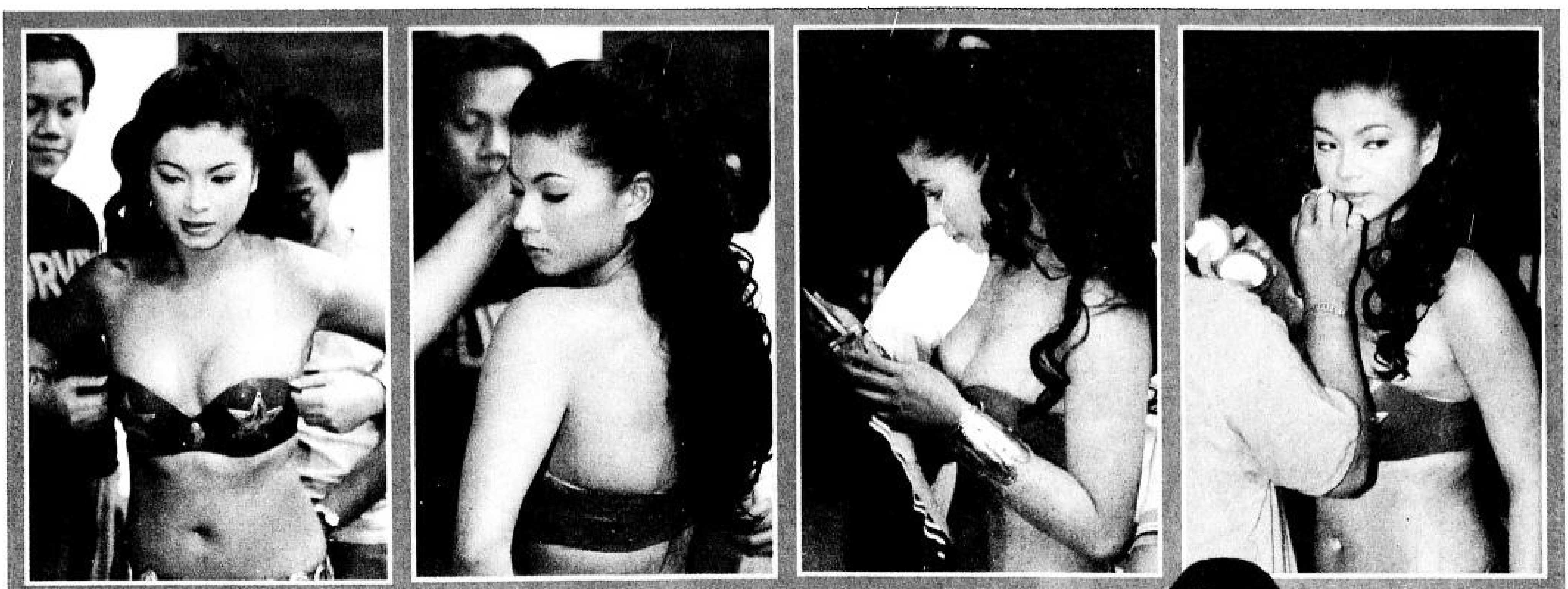


PUTTING together an idol for modern times. Sexy costume, hair extensions, cell phone! Angel Locsin says her Darna's mission is to liberate the oppressed. Oh, my, where to start?

Darna!

From page A2-1

Angel Locsin

"The GMA 7 bosses informed me about the show last January, but I didn't think much about it because I was still in 'Mulawin.' This show will be more advanced, compared to 'Mulawin.' There will be more special effects, more flying and more stunts."

"People will see a different Narda—no longer a crybaby, *palaban na* (a fighter). She goes through a lot of trials, which makes her stronger. She is the family's breadwinner. She sells fish and vegetables in the public market in the morning and works as a janitress at night.

"Conflict arises when she acquires her power and starts helping people as Darna. She fails to get to work on time, *nababawasan ang sweldo niya* (she gets pay cuts). Her brother Ding, who needs his allowance to go to school, gets suspicious.

"In the beginning, Narda's relationship with Ding is very unstable. They love each other but fight a lot about money. This is because Ding does not understand why his sister suddenly disappears or fails to make it to work on time.

"Valentina is Narda's cousin and childhood friend. Their rift starts when, while exploring the forest, Valentina gets swallowed by a giant anaconda. Valentina gets angry because she thought Narda left her behind. In fact, Narda left to look for help. But of course, when the anaconda releases Valentina, she has changed. She's become scheming and vengeful."

Alessandra de Rossi

"Initially, I was reluctant to take on the villain role, my first, because I didn't want viewers to hate me. I've heard of TV villains being hit by fans with umbrellas in the mall. But I think people are more mature now. They already know that what they see on TV is not real life.

"The TV adaptation delves into Valentina's anger, which dates back to her childhood with Narda. Even after years of not seeing her cousin, Valentina remains bitter and furious. She lures Darna's love interest away. Whoever comes to Darna's life, I will steal from her—*kasi nga maganda ako*!

"I'm studying how to deal with my vertigo [non-existent sense of balance]. 'Di ba kailangan flat kapag lumilipad? I can't do that! But getting on a harness is not a problem to me. I've done it before but this is the first time that I'll do stunts while flying. It helps that I took up karate-do before and I'm so hyper."

MAKING sure the bra holds up and the tresses stay put.

Sandy Andolong

"I play the role of Prospera—Valentina's mother and Narda's wicked aunt. Narda's father, Manolo, and I have the same father, but I don't like him. I am rich, he is really poor. I maltreat Narda and her brother Ding.

Karen de los Reyes

"I'm Alice, Narda's best friend. Like Narda, I sell fish and vegetables in the public market. My character is very funny and *kikay*. It's very different from my *kontrabida* role in 'Mulawin.' I'm very pleased. Very few people know that I enjoy making people laugh. Now, I finally get the chance."

Caridad Sanchez

"I accepted the role of Aio only after the producers explained to me how powerful the character is. She is the only remaining living being from the planet Andranika. She comes to Earth to pass on the power of the queen of that planet to a human being who can continue the queen's mission. For now, that's all I can tell you about her." (Maureen Larrazabal plays the role of the younger Aio.)

Tonton Gutierrez

"I am Manolo, father of Narda and Ding and Prospera's half-brother. I'm a farmer and I spend most of my time in the field. My family is very poor. We are indebted to Prospera because we live on one of her properties.

"Later in the series, viewers will see me transform into Nosforamus, Pinoy version of the Grim Reaper. He feeds on people's dreams and good memories. Manolo turns into a villain when the evil Braguda possesses him."

Jeremy Marquez

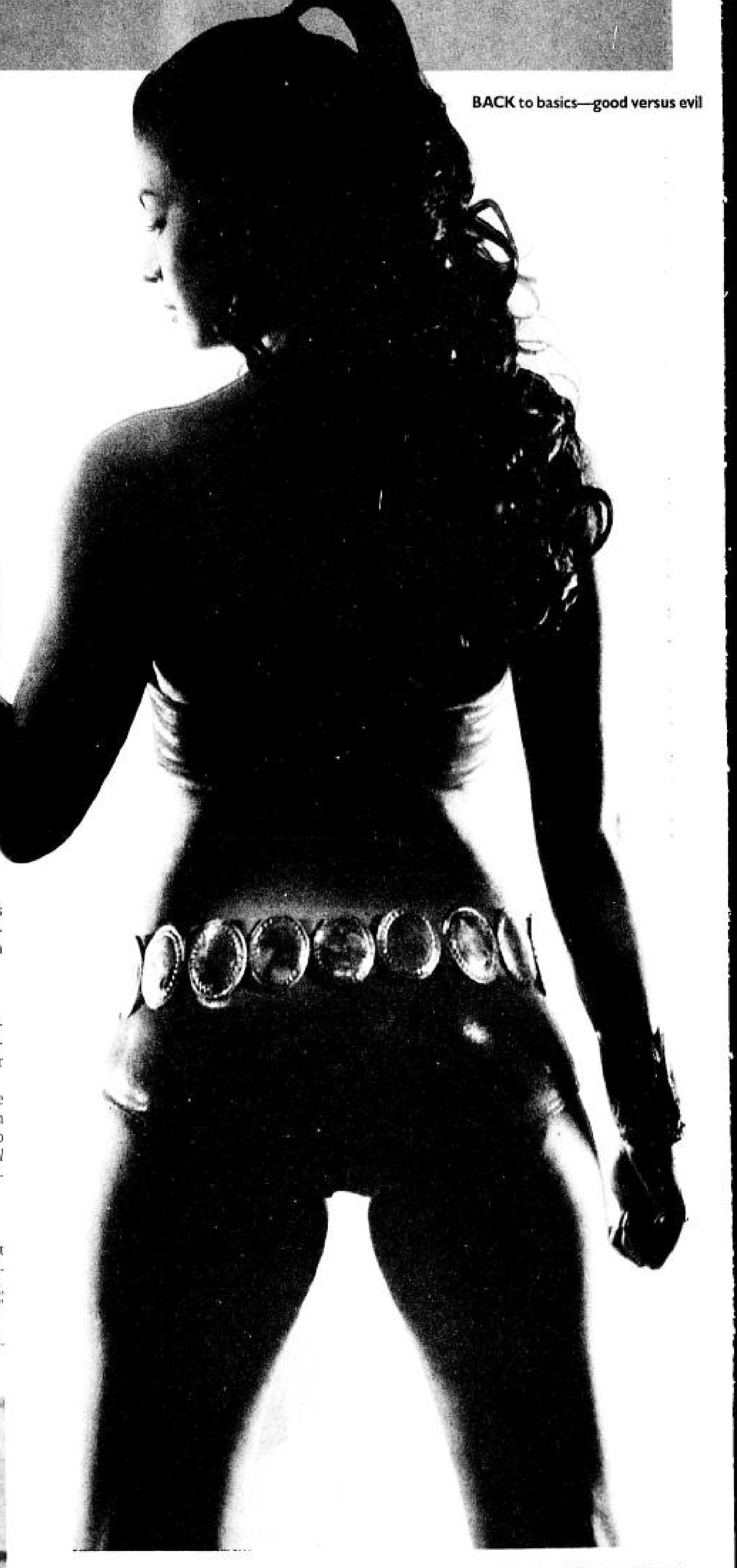
"I'm June, Narda's friend and secret admirer. My character likes Narda so much, but her heart beats for someone else.

"Angel is the perfect Darna for me because she's beautiful and she can do both action and drama. Alex is also the best choice for Valentina. *Natural ang pagkataklesa n'ya* (She's naturally tactless)."

Ella Guevara

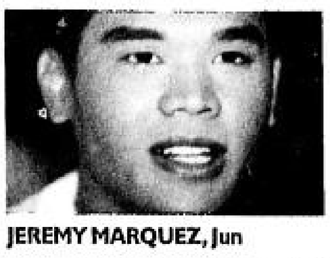
"I play the role of Len-Len, a street child who has a dark side. My character gets close to Narda through Iking, an orphan adopted by Narda's family."

(e-mail the authors at mcruz@inquirer.com.ph and jtvalle@hotmailcom)



BACK to basics—good versus evil

SANDY ANDOLONG, Prospera



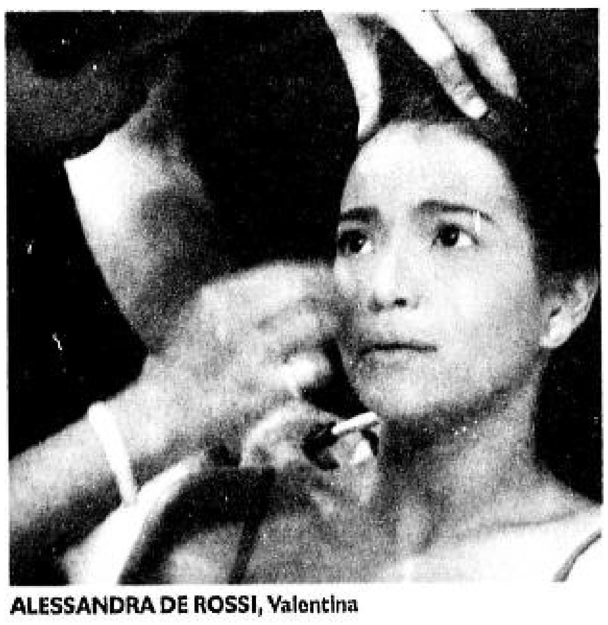
JEREMY MARQUEZ, Jun

ELLA GUEVARA, Len-Len

CARIDAD SANCHEZ, Aio

DOMINIC ZAPATA, director

KAREN DELOS REYES, Alice



ALESSANDRA DE ROSSI, Valentina

SOCCER
Oakley

RENZ VALERIO, young Ding

GEE, IS THAT ATE VI?
Yes, and Nanette Medved, both in the famous red-and-gold costume. Onscreen, the country's most popular superheroine has gone through several incarnations. The first-ever movie "Darna" was Rosa del Rosario. The last before Angel Locsin was Regine Velasquez.

Fortune …

From page A2-4

lar career isn't flying high these days, so his getting paid much less for his occasional film roles. But he can at least look back to his glittering, top-money years as a child sensation.

John Travolta's case is the opposite: He became a popular star with "Saturday Night Fever" and other early hits, but his career eventually fizzled out until the time came when nobody wanted to hire him.

Happily, he was offered a role in "Pulp Fiction," for which he was paid a non-stellar fee of only $140,000. When the movie became a hit, Travolta's stock in Hollywood rose, and he got $5M for "Get Shorty," $8M for "Phenomenon," and $17M for "Primary Colors." He was even able to clinch a three-picture deal for $60M!

Corban summer courses

CORBAN Daycare and Learning Center will hold these courses this summer: Remedial Reading and Math for preschool up to Grade 4, 10-11 a.m. from March 28 to June 3.

Easy English for Teens and Kids, for high school students, 10 a.m. to 12 noon; for grade school students, 2-4 p.m., T-TH, from March 29 to April 29.

English and Business Writing for Adults, for college students and professionals, every Saturday, 2-5 p.m.

Easy English for Adults, every Sunday, 2-5 p.m. Call 842-665.

'Fear Factor2'

AXN telecasts the fifth season of "Fear Factor" every Monday at 8 p.m. The new season features special telecasts like the "wet 'n' wild" episode, and the program's spectacular 100th episode, filmed on location in New York. **Joe Rogan** puts the show's plucky contestants through their daunting paces.

Sunrise in her eyes

From page A2-4

What Jones seems to have created, or continues to develop, is a singing style that reminds us of Carole King, Linda Ronstadt, Rickie Lee Jones and other cool rock chicks who were remarkable for the way they interpreted romance, each in a distinctive, introspective mood.

At the Big Dome concert, we fell for Jones' thoughtful delivery of songs that spoke of how words and the weather play key roles in unlocking the mysteries of falling in and out of love.

Most of these songs were co-written with bassist Lee Alexander, drummer Andrew Borger, guitarists Adam Levy and Kevin Brent, and backup vocalist Daru Oda—yes, the Handsome Band—all of whom, with the exception of Brent, played with her onstage.

Each displaying restraint and subtlety of style, the band members were nevertheless given their respective shining moments that didn't escape notice. Neither did the frequency with which they changed instruments. The Handsome Band suits Jones like a glove, dear old friends they actually are, with the fine addition of guitarist Robbie McKintosh of the Pretenders and Paul McCartney fame. At several points in the gig, he and Levy coaxed ringing notes so emotional as to elicit whistles and shouts from an appreciative audience.

No frills

The most significant thing about Jones' music is the manner by which it commands sweet attention, given its no-frills approach and simplicity. In performance, the first few notes of "Don't Know Why" and "Come Away With Me" were enough to send the crowd roaring with approval.

This measure of enthusiasm overwhelms Jones. In the special edition CD interview, she confides that performing before a large audience could be stressful, owing to the presence of critics and reviewers. At the Big Dome, she was cracking jokes ("At Sesame Street I was supposed to have a date with the letter Y, but he stood me up, he was with his X…") and playfully avoiding stray insects ("This song is for the mosquito…") before doing "The Nearness of You."

At 26, Jones is a fascinating sight to behold: mixing her new works with cover material from the band, Tom Waits and Gram Parsons, performing an amalgam of old musical traditions that she has been imbibing like oxygen. Near the end of the Araneta show, she succeeded in turning on the likes of Piolo Pascual, Plinky Recto, Johnny Manahan, Gabby Lopez, Laurenti Dyogi, Pinky Amador, Vic del Rosario and the whole local show biz set to the strains of country music in "Creepin' In."

The biggest boost, however, came from the farthest ends of the bleachers section where lusty cheers sounded as though Jones was within kissing distance.

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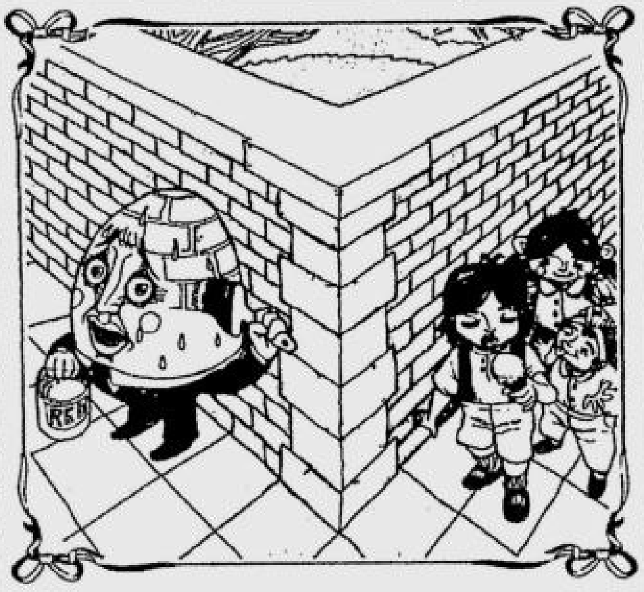

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7 GOSPEL OF JOHN smmoviefest
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9 CONSTANTINE
10 RESERVED
11 RESERVED
12 RESERVED

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7 PASSION OF THE CHRIST smmoviefest
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9 SANTA SANTITA smmoviefest
10 FINAL CUT
11 HITCH
12 SHAOLIN v.s EVIL DEAD

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2 ROBOTS
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6 HOSTAGE
7 CONFIDENCE
8 GOSPEL OF JOHN smmoviefest

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4 ROBOTS
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12 GOSPEL OF JOHN smmoviefest

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Sophie and Julien continue a childhood game of daring each other. And over the years, as their secret love for each went deeper, so has the stakes of their game gone higher.

Sunrise in her eyes

Norah Jones casts spell on Pinoy fans

By Pocholo Concepcion
Contributor

ONLY four years ago, pianist-singer Norah Jones dropped out of music school in Texas and went back to New York City (her birthplace) to play all the gigs she could get. In the daytime, she worked as a waitress to pay the rent. Never did she imagine she would land a record deal, much less perform outside small jazz clubs.

After recording two albums and winning Grammy awards too many for her to carry in both arms, Jones has found herself going around the world on a concert tour. In between plane rides, she's probably muttering something similar to what she was overheard saying in the company Aretha Franklin and Bonnie Raitt at the Grammys: "This is all a dream, it's insane!"

Memorable

Saturday night, the Asian leg of that tour made a seventh stop in Metro Manila at the Araneta Coliseum. A fair-sized crowd gave Jones a warm reception, and she put on a short but memorable performance punctuated by the understated musicianship of her backup group that she calls Handsome Band.

The cavernous Big Dome was transformed into an intimate setting for music that Jones' Blue Note record label had aptly described as "heartfelt."

For some people, laid-back music could induce sleep, but many others took an instant liking to Jones' debut CD, "Come Away With Me." Her word for the sound was "mellow." The album went multi-platinum and swept last year's Grammys with eight awards, including Album of the Year.

That mellow sound was still very much evident at the Big Dome, although the lineup sported more rhythmic variety, with songs from Jones' second and latest CD, "Feels Like Home."

Shifting between the Yamaha grand and the Wurlitzer electric piano, Jones coasted along on melodies derived from blues and country and shaped by jazz, her voice providing the lilt and counterpoint to an easygoing backdrop of brush drums, upright bass and acoustic guitars.

Evolving

Her music is still evolving, Jones points out in an interview that comes with four live songs, two music videos and three unreleased tracks on a special edition CD of "Feels Like Home" that EMI Music Philippines recently made available.

The evolving music is apparently the sound that she's most comfortable with. She's no screamer or belter, she said, having dreamed she might one day become like Dinah Washington, Sarah Vaughan or Billie Holiday.

SUNRISE/ A2-3

Fortune over fame

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

SOME people who become entertainers are dazzled by the fame that show biz stardom brings, but more stellar wannabes are in it for the fortune. That's right, what matters most to them is the money—so let's talk turkey, shall we?

Many people want to know how much movie stars make per film, so here's the lowdown on all that luscious stellar lucre:

Historically, the first stars to be paid a million dollars per film were **Marlon Brando** and **Elizabeth Taylor** (for "The Fugitive Kind" and "Cleopatra," respectively).

Later, however, stars' escalating popularity with film audiences made them among the major reasons that people went to the movies. Aware of their "star value," actors began to demand—and get—increasingly higher talent fees.

The top 10 stars today (**Tom Cruise, Julia Roberts, Harrison Ford**, etc.) command fees upwards of $20M per film. Aside from their cash income, some top stars also get percentage points or "profit participation" deals that eventually add many more millions to their grosses.

For instance, for starring in and producing "Mission Impossible," Tom Cruise got $20M plus percentage perks, and the film turned out to be so profitable that he ended up making $60M for acting in the action-adventure blockbuster! Nice work, if you can get it.

Other rolls of the Hollywood dice that have paid handsome dividends to some lucky stars: **Goldie Hawn** ended up with more than $10M for "Private Benjamin" due to her back-end deal. **Dustin Hoffman** made over $25M for his performance in "Tootsie."

Are they worth it? When he was at the height of his career, was wooden-faced **Steven Segal** convincing enough to merit a whopping $15M salary? Did **Sylvester Stallone** deserve to be paid $20M? **Kurt Russell** $10M? There's no justice in the world!

Other top earners in Hollywood: **Clint Eastwood**, $15M **Sean Connery**, $14M. **Richard Gere**, $10M. **Eddie Murphy**, $16M. **Jack Nicholson**, $12M. **Robert Redford**, $10M.

For some stars, it's a long, slow climb to millionaires' row. For instance, when **Jim Carrey** started his screen career by performing on the TV comedy show, "In Living Color," he got "only" $25,000 per episode. When he made his first film, "The Mask," his fee was a relatively modes $150,000.

The film turned out to be a sleeper hit, so Carrey's fee rose ast ronomically for his follow-up starrer, "Dumb and Dumber"—to $7M! (His co-stars, **Jack Daniels,** got only $500,000.)

After that there was no looking back for the upwardly mobile Carrey, who's now one of Hollywood's top moneymakers.

Child star **Macaulay Culkin** got only $100,000 for "Home Alone." The film became a huge hit, so for its sequel, Culkin was paid a whopping $5M! His fee went up to $8M for "Richie Rich," before his popularity dipped.

The former child star's stel-

FORTUNE/ A2-3

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER TV GUIDE

Wednesday, March 16, 2005

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ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Showbiz No. 1 (4.25 PM)	Gatekeepers (5.10 PM)	Gundam Seed (5.35 PM)	The Road To Stardom	TV Patrol		Spirits	Krystala	Hiram	Save The Last Dance	'Til Death Do Us Part	Yes Yes Show			Insider
NBN	Value Vision	Value Vision		Value Vision	Teledyaryo	Value Vision		Talk Ko 'To		Linya		Teledyaryo		Sinulog Festival				Paco Park Presents	
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	PBA Game-Bol	PBA		PBA		Sentro	PBA					Big News	American Idol		Look Who's Talking	
GMA 7		Saang Sulok Ng Langit	Joyride	Glass Shoes	One Piece	Knock Out	Tyler Hungry Heart	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Mulawin		Full House	Stairway To Heaven	Nuts Entertainment			Saksi
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MYX		Urban MYX		Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	MYX Live!		My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC		Knock First	JKX	The Today Show		Starting Over		NBC Nightly News		Will & Grace	Good Morning Miami					Tonight Show With Jay Leno			
Cinema One		The Grudge 2				Lahar				Linlang				The Flor Contemplacion Story (9.15 PM)				Antonia Part 2	
Studio 23		Urban MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	Batman Beyond	Project Arms	Wazzup Wazzup	C.S.I.			Las Vegas		News Central	Oprah		The Good Life With Cory Quirino
AXN		The Amazing Race 5		Maximum Exposure		The Contender		Samurai X	Samurai X	Andromeda (Season III)		Ripley's Believe It or Not		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation		The Contender		Fear Factor	
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		American Idol		Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	American Idol				Third Watch III		Friends	American Idol
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News		World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic		Showreel Asia		Taboo		Dangerous Jobs		The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles Dr. Brady Barr	Wow		About Asia		Nat Geographic Specials		Showreel Asia	Taboo		
Solar Sports	Copenhagen Masters Den. vs Ina		RP-Taiwan 9 Ball Chal. Gabica vs. Chang					2005 All England Badminton Semi-Finals		GWS Ep.9-2005			NBA TV Daily	NBA Game Orlando @ Sacramento					NBA Inside Stuff
Lifestyle Network	Country Style	Interiors By Design	Decorating With Style	Decorating Cents	Molto Mario	Sweet Dreams	30 Minute Meals	Bill Boggs Corner	Unwrapped	Wolfgang Puck's								New York Nick	
HBO		Chasers (2.50 PM)			My House In Umbria (4.20 PM)			HBO Sneak Peek: The Lord Of The Rings The Two Towers						The Cat's Meow				Thir13en Ghosts (10.50PM)	
Star Movies	Lost Junction			The Terminator (4.15 PM)				Slums Of Beverly Hills			Stone Cold			Agent Red (aka Captured)			Terror Peak (10.45PM)		
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	The Woody Woodpecker Show	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	X-Men Evolution	Static Shock	Yu-Gi-Oh!	Shaman King	The Looney Tunes Show		The Powerpuff Girls	Dexter's Laboratory	Mr. T	Josie And The Pussycats	The Superfriends	Yu-Gi-Oh!
ESPN		Motorsport Asia	Arc Basketball Tour Washington, DC USA (Semi)				Arc Basketball Tour Washington, DC USA (Semi)				Goals!	Sportscenter Asia	2004 Women's Trick Shot Magic CT USA		UEFA Champions League '04/05 Milan, Italy				Sportscenter Asia
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Totally Spies	The Sleepover Club	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean: The Animated Series	Lilo & Stitch/Untalkative Bunny	An American Tail II: Fievel Goes West			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	America's Funniest Home Video	According To Jim	Princess of Thieves	
Cinemax		Jagged Edge (3.15 PM)				Framed (5.15 PM)				The Assignment				Hostile Waters			Bram Stoker's Dracula		
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	The Mystery Of Natalie Wood				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched	Judging Amy		Missing		I Do But I Don't			Strong Medicine (10.35PM)		Judging Amy (11.25PM)
Discovery Channel		Science Mysteries		Science Frontiers		Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery		Building The Great Pyramid		Hidden History Of Egypt...		Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery		Hour Asia	
MTV Philippines													Whatever Things		Bikini Destination				
Sports Plus				UAW-Daimler Chrysler Highlights		Raceworld		Golf Int'l.	You've Got to See This	NBA Game Minnesota @ Dallas						World Poker Tour ep.9 Los Angeles			
EWTN	Council Of Faith	Angelus (3.15 PM)	Refurbishing The Soul	The Donut Man	Faith Factory	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of Angels Monastery	Saints For The Third Millennium	The Virtues	EWTN Gallery	Mother Angelica Live Classics		One In Their Hearts	Pope Pius XII	Daily Mass		Angelus (10.15PM)	St. Catherine Of Sienna	Our Father's Plan	

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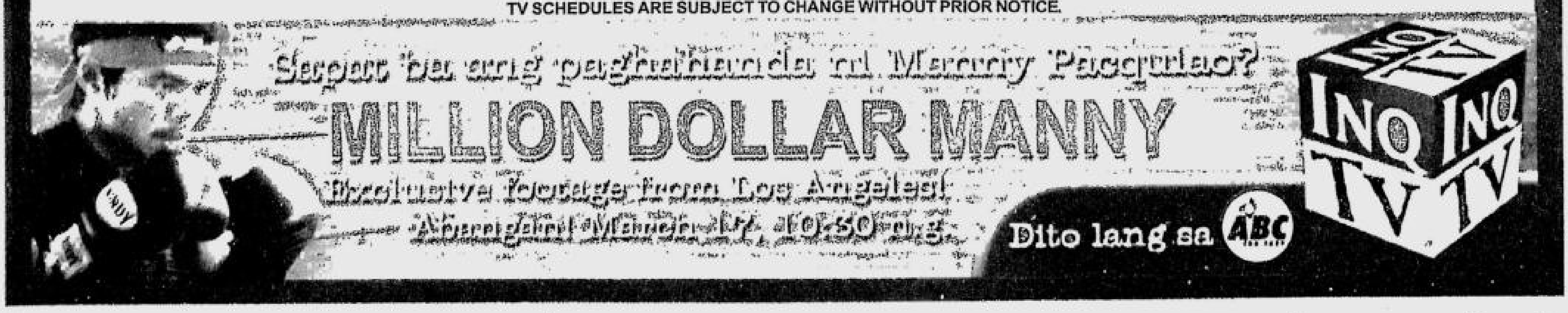
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Editor Emmie G. Velarde

OPENING TODAY

Bahay ni Lola 2

Directed by Joven Tan
Stars Dingdong Dantes, Karylle, Gloria Romero, Cherry Pie Picache, John Lapus

NOT a sequel to Mother Lily's top-grossing 2001 Metro Manila Film Festival entry "Bahay ni Lola." Plot summary: Newlyweds Rupert and Nina buy a big house for a ridiculously low price. They move in with a whole barangay of relatives and start renovating. Bad things start happening. And we don't mean John Lapus who plays the interior decorator. An old woman appears late at night, carpenters working on the house get boils, and worst of all, Rupert starts digging in the backyard all by his lonesome, hoping to build a swimming pool.

The "Bahay ni Lola" website, which, by the way, is most impressive, promises "a scarier, more haunting 'Bahay.'" Is this true, Mother?

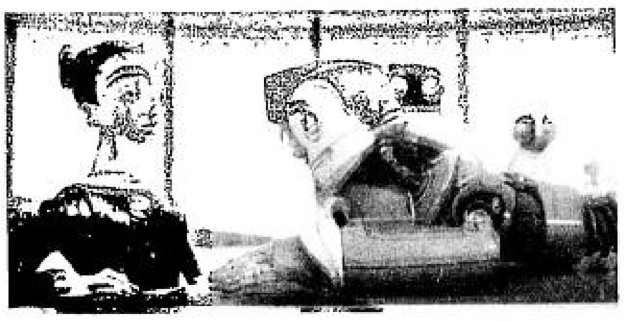
The Gospel of John

Directed by Philip Saville
Stars Christopher Plummer (voice only), Henry Ian Cusick, Stuart Bunce, Diana Berriman

PLOT summary: For God so loved the world . . . the story of Jesus, as told by apostle John, is narrated by "The Sound of Music's" Christopher Plummer. In three hours. Lent is truly just around the corner. This movie was released at the same time as Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ."

Ruthe Stein, of San Francisco Chronicle, wrote this Feb. 13, 2004 review: "Hearing that 'Gospel' is a three-hour word-for-word translation of the Good News Bible, complete with narration, sounds like an invitation to a nap. The movie, however, turns out to be surprisingly robust. It boasts a large cast, not of Cecil B. DeMille proportions, but big enough to show that Jesus got around.

"No attempt is made to glamorize the people of that time. They're shown with dirty faces, soiled fingernails and rudimentary clothing (though you do have to wonder about their surprisingly modern-looking sandals)."



Robots

Directed by Chris Wedge
Stars Ewan McGregor, Halle Berry, Robin Williams, Mel Brooks, Greg Kinnear

PLOT summary: Set in a world populated entirely by robots, this is the story of a young genius, Rodney, who wants to make robots capable of making the world a better place. His dream is challenged by a corporate tyrant and a master inventor, Big Weld, while also being seduced by a sexy corporate robot, Cappy. This is from the same guys who made "Ice Age." Released worldwide on March 11.

Excerpts from Roger Ebert's March 11 review in the Chicago-Sun Times: "The thing that struck me first of all about 'Robots' was its pictorial beauty. I doubt that was the intention of the filmmakers, who've made a slapstick comedy set in a futurist city.

". . . As the movie opens, Herb Copperbottom and his wife are unwrapping their new little boy who has arrived in a shipping crate, some assembly required. This being a PG-rated movie aimed at the whole family, the robots even have the ability to fart, which is a crucial entertainment requirement of younger children."

Confidence

Directed by James Foley
Stars Edward Burns, Andy Garcia, Paul Giamatti, Dustin Hoffman, Rachel Weisz

PLOT summary: A con man's latest scam gets him into trouble with the Mafia. The mob boss assigns an enforcer to shadow his every move. Meanwhile, the con man and his crew pull off another scam to pay off their debt as well as the Mafia's.

An excerpt from Peter Travers' May 2, 2003 review in the Rolling Stone: "This is a one sweet sexy sting of a movie. I've heard people say that one con-game flick is the same as another, that is unless David Mamet writes it and it turns into a classic like, say, Glengarry Glen Ross. Well, Mamet didn't write 'Confidence,' Doug Jung did. And if Jung doesn't reinvent 'Pulp Fiction,' at least he knows how to twist it into playful new shapes. The first line in the movie had me hooked: 'So I'm dead, and I think it's because of this redhead.' Nice, huh? The speaker is Jake Vig (Burns), a scam artist who finds himself lying face down in an alley. There is blood. Jake will narrate the movie in flashback."

Shaolin vs. Evil Dead

Directed by Douglas Kung
Stars Gordon Liu, Louis Fan

PLOT summary: When the immortal King of the Vampires is accidentally re-awakened, it is up to two competing Shaolin monks, Brother White and Brother Black to save the world from the devastating army of darkness. Aided by their assistants, the bungling Sun and Fire and the beautiful but deadly Moon, White and Black are forced to confront bizarre hopping vampires, maggot-ridden corpses, exploding midget zombies and armies of junior Shaolin monks and kung fu killers in a superb Satanic showdown.

Quentin Tarantino's "Kill Bill" meets Sam Raimi's "The Evil Dead." The Master Killer in "Kill Bill" 1 and 2 stars and takes on the forces of the demonic underworld in this weird and wonderful, horror-comedy kung fu flick.

'Robots' rule with $36.5-M debut

LOS ANGELES—"Robots" ruled the box office as the animated family flick debuted with $36.5 million—a solid opening, but well below the $46.3 million premiere of the filmmakers' previous hit, "Ice Age."

While "Ice Age" opened with little competition for the family crowd, "Robots" faced Vin Diesel's hit "The Pacifier," the previous weekend's No. 1 movie. "The Pacifier" finished a strong second with $18.1 million, lifting its 10-day total to $54.4 million according to studio estimates Sunday.

The weekend's other new wide release, the Bruce Willis police thriller "Hostage," debuted at No. 4 with $9.8 million.

Mel Gibson's religious blockbuster "The Passion of the Christ," which grossed $370 million last year, made barely a ripple at theaters in a recut version that toned down the blood and violence. "The Passion Recut" played in 957 theaters but took in just $239,850 (euro178,779).

In sharp contrast to the firestorm over the original film, the new version of "The Passion" arrived quietly, with little fanfare. The fact that the original is available on DVD limited theatrical prospects for the recut edition.

Gibson said he recut the movie for people who were put off by the brutality of the original, which explicitly depicted Christ's scourging and crucifixion.

"We certainly had higher expectations than what we got," said Rob Schwartz, head of distribution for Newmarket Films, which released "The Passion of the Christ" and the new cut.

Newmarket executives hope more moviegoers will turn out as Easter approaches, Schwartz said.

"Robots," featuring the voices of Ewan McGregor, Halle Berry, Robin Williams and Mel Brooks, is the second feature-length cartoon tale from "Ice Age" directors Chris Wedge and Carlos Saldanha. The movie tracks the adventures of an idealistic robot inventor who moves to the big city.

In limited release, the Joan Allen-Kevin Costner comic drama "The Upside of Anger" opened strongly with $225,783 in nine theaters. The film, centering on a boozy mother embittered over the abrupt departure of her husband, expands to about 150 theaters this weekend.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at North American theaters, according to Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc.

1) "Robots,"	$36.5 million
2) "The Pacifier,"	$18.1 million
3) "Be Cool,"	$10.3 million
4) "Hostage,"	$9.8 million
5) "Hitch,"	$8.7 million
6) "Million Dollar Baby,"	$5.1 million
7) "Diary of a Mad Black Woman,"	$5 million
8) "Constantine,"	$3.7 million
9) "Man of the House,"	$1.8 million
10) "Cursed,"	$1.6 million

AP

MARIO Vazquez

NIKKO Smith

Mario drops out of 'Idol,' Nikko back

LOS ANGELES—Fan favorite Mario Vazquez withdrew from "American Idol" on Sunday (Monday in Manila), and producers called in the son of a baseball Hall of Famer as backup.

Vazquez, 27, cited "personal reasons" for his withdrawal and no other details were available, Fox announced in a statement. The New York City singer, who works with emerging musical artists, had been picked by many fans and three fellow finalists as a favorite to win the competition.

Fox bumped Nikko Smith, son of baseball great Ozzie Smith, into Vazquez's spot because Smith got more votes than Travis Tucker when both were voted off Wednesday, the network said.

Smith, 22, of St. Louis, Mo., said in an interview before Sunday's announcement that he wasn't surprised to have been voted off.

"I wasn't as disappointed as people thought I would be because I've made it so far," he told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. "I'm happy to get all that exposure. Millions and millions of people watch the show, and hopefully somebody saw me and liked what they saw."

Now, viewers of the No. 1-rated series will get a chance to reconsider their votes as Smith and the other 11 finalists perform today.

Vazquez is not the first to leave "Idol" unexpectedly, though few have done so willingly. Last year, George Huff was called back to Los Angeles when contestant Donnie Williams was cited for DUI (driving under the influence). And in 2003, three contestants were dropped by Fox, two for failing to disclose arrest records and another for posing on an adult-oriented website. *yahoo! news*

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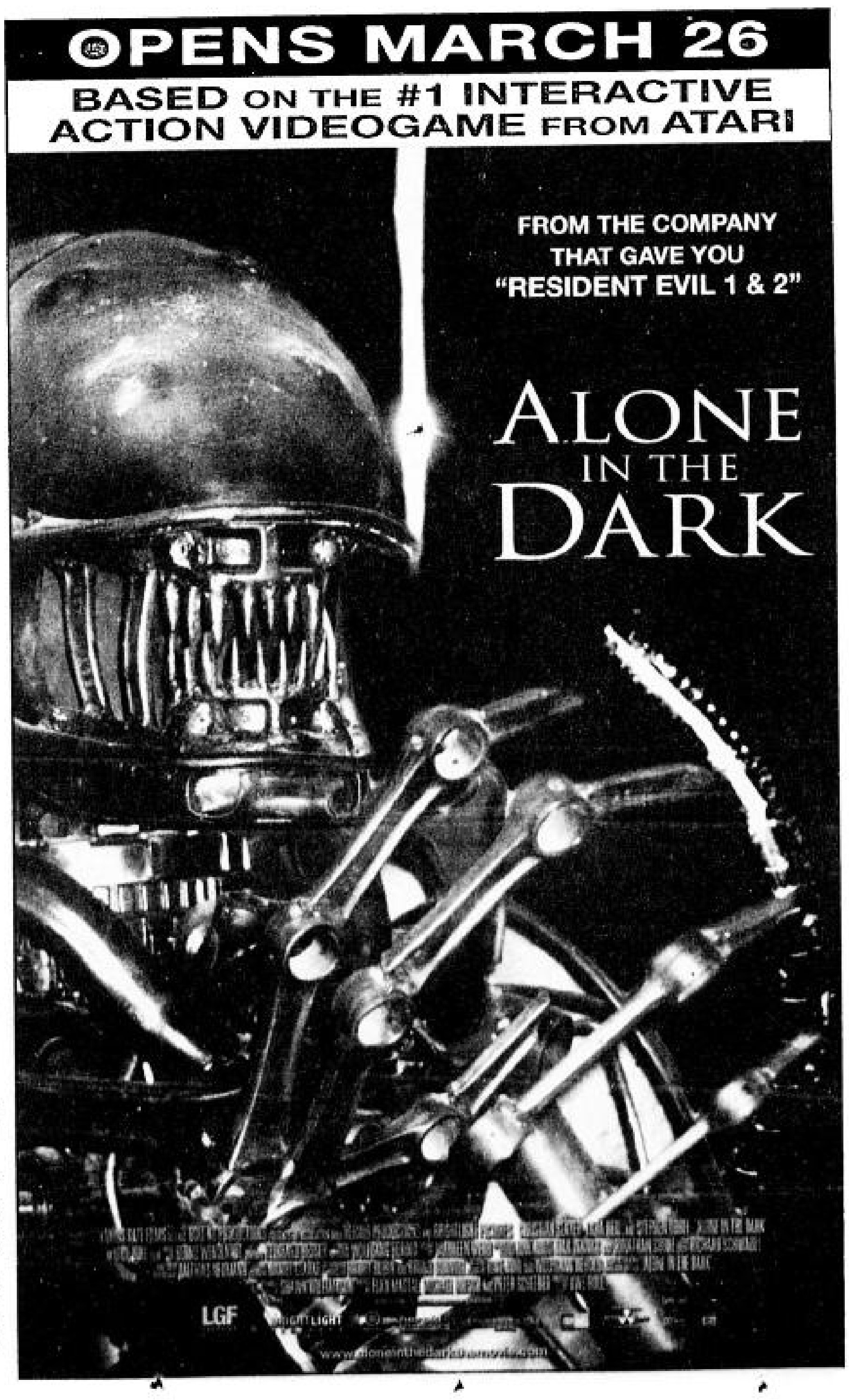

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'Making gimmick' in

By Heidi Lenffer

EACH night in Metro Manila, blinding stage lights illuminate a rite of passage for the partygoer, or "*gimikera*" who, enticed by the singer and intoxicated by the moment, submits to the surge of peer support and leaps onstage to dance.

There is comfort in the sea of faces, as a multitude of stories merge in union with the bass line.

Emotional baggage is checked into lockers at the entrance, and differences are put on hold. Inhibitions that refuse to surrender to the beat are diluted manually, and trampled under the feet of a heaving crowd. Exhausted booty-shakers collapse into their seats and consume a variety of finger-licking *pulutan*—including the hot and crunchy favorite, *sisig*—to recharge their senses for the next round.

This is "making gimmick," Manila-style, and is certainly worth the jeepney fare.

At first glanc Makati—skycraper centr of Metro Manila—appea deceptively business-or ented. There is little indication of a simmering wel spring of nightlife tha bides its time during th day only to spill forth wit energy onto the darkene streets.

Greenbelt is unrivale as a nightspot. Boasting selection of popular night clubs, as well as trend bars, high-fashion boutiques, and haute cuisin it is exceedingly beautifu in a constructed-paradis kind of way.

Divided into four complexes, Greenbelt is all water features; colored light projected on fountain palm trees and other a tractive greenery. sprawls contentedly acros one side of district, playin host to legions of foreigners and locals.

Restaurants like Magnum, Cena, Masas Filipin Cuisine and Soleil, eac has an outdoor dining are where the guests are romanced by acoustic musicians.

Transformation

As midnight approache and the fine diners sli away, the demographi undergoes a generationa transformation.

Skirts are shortene heels are heightened, an DJs emerge to fasttrack th groove and seduce youn things to the dance floors.

Ice Vodka Bar in Greenbelt 3 has an ambiance a cool as its name suggest complete with sub-zer air-conditioning, blu lighting and sparse, black and-white décor. On minute away is the similarly successful Absinth which features an outdoor seating area, an in-hous DJ, and VIPs galore.

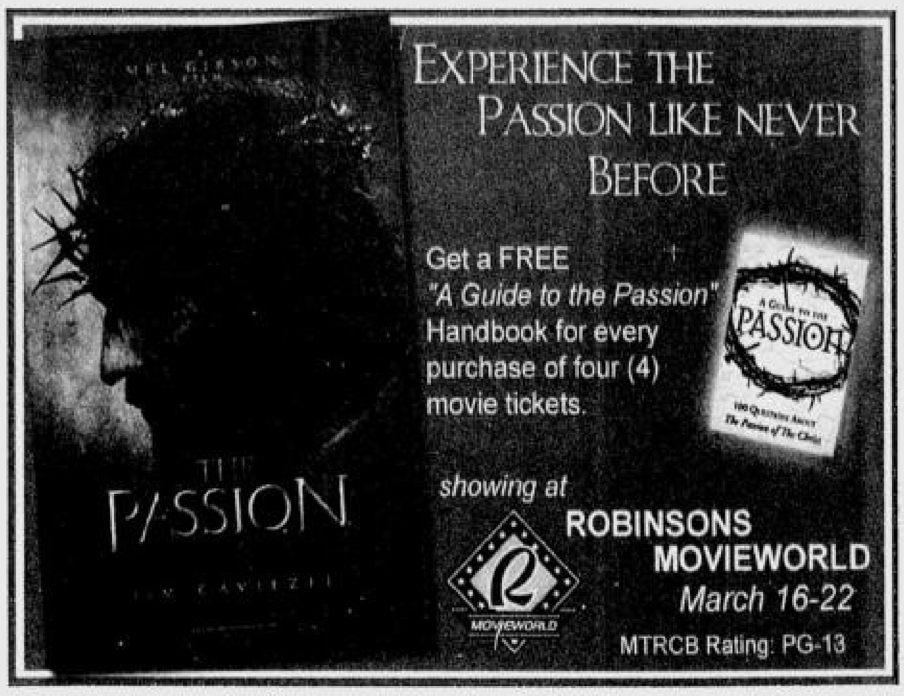
Across the road i Greenbelt 2 is Temple Ba distinguished by a hug Buddha bearing down on hip crowd.

At the high end of th spectrum, Captain's Bar inside the Mandarin Hote revolves around a circula performance space that extends to a generous balcony seating area. Th décor is reflective an golden, and dance-floo frivolities are dignified b two grand chandeliers tha dominate the great expanse of ceiling.

The Peninsula Hotel ha a lobby that must be large that the national budge deficit. A live jazz band secures the mood, and diner recline beneath the ornat artistic impression of th sun that decorates the ceiling.

Live acts

Club Havana brings burst of tropical flavor t the forecourt of Greenbel 3. Registering the larges concentration of white fol I have witnessed durin my stay, this popular venu



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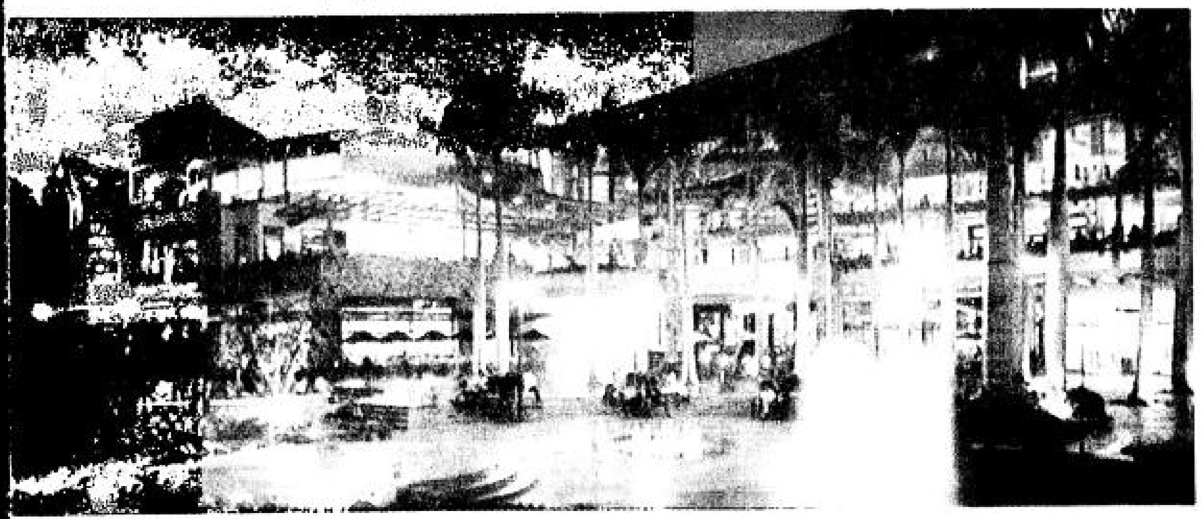


GREENBELT 3, Makati

n an eyes

Manila

is a favorite haunt for many foreigners and rarely has a vacant table.

Featuring a live band every night of the week. Club Havana heats it up with a variety of beats ranging from the steamy rhythms of salsa and merenge, reggae, and the occasional Bollywood night. Guests are free to dance, eat and relish the atmosphere amongst the towering palm trees.

A half-hour taxi ride away, depending on traffic, is the party street of Eastwood, Libis in Quezon City with a range of bars, including Blue Onion and Ipanema, offering a similar brand of fun.

Ratsky's Bar, also in Quezon City, has a steeper cover charge than most clubs, but the experience that it buys is worth every peso.

With a generous dance floor, an equally spacious seating area, clean comfort rooms, and quality bands, Ratsky's is well established as a leading entertainment venue in the area.

Dish, also in Quezon City, is similarly known for its live acts and caters accordingly with a family-friendly venue; spacious and clean, hosting both lesser-known and big-name bands like South Border.

The hub of Club Nirvana in Pasay City also revolves around a prominent stage. However, the activities of patrons are limited to dancing, as the eating area is oppressively dark and sound levels are too high to enjoy any interaction.

In contrast, the balance of lighting and sound in Strumm's, Makati, combined with a double-leveled venue layout, creates an intimate atmosphere where balcony revelers are not excluded from the fun, but can practically lean over the stage.

Social pulse

In spite of serious scarring on the nation's economic landscape, there is no doubt that the Filipino social pulse is pumping healthy. This is no small feat, given the burden of the nation's past and ongoing tribulations.

While it is tempting to attribute this to the Filipino's partiality for laughter, to dismiss it as such would be to mistake a symptom for a cause. A more substantial analysis would suggest that the root of this frivolity is a wisdom wrought from hardship—a mindset that allows for renewed appreciation of life's joys. A drink with friends, or an exhibition of flailing limbs on the dance floor.

And for the shameless, there's always videoke.

(Heidi is a student at the University of Sydney, and was an intern at the Philippine Daily Inquirer.)

Memories of terror

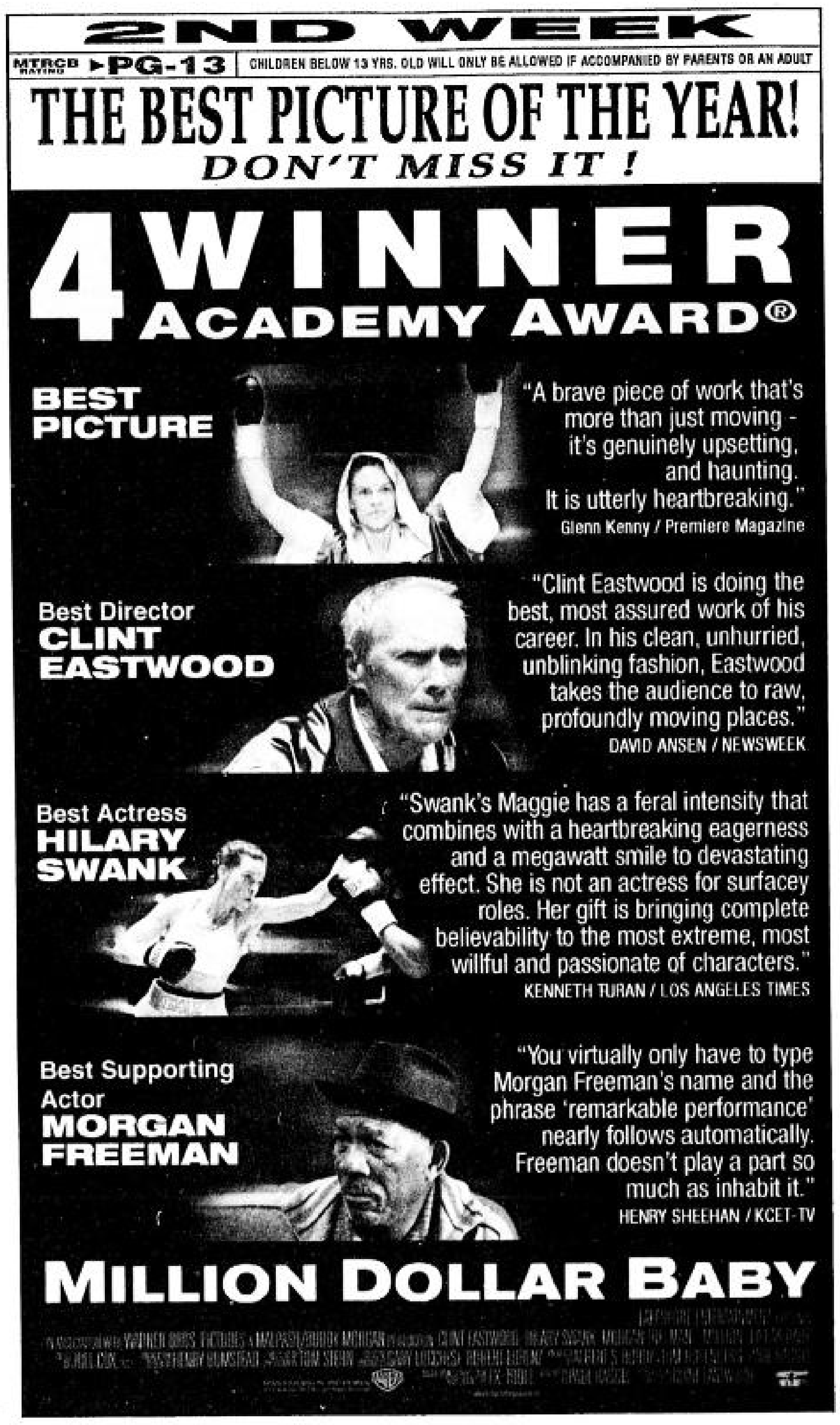
From page A3-4

hotel, where our group (Family Birth Control) was singing. I told the doctor, "Doc, *gandahan na lang ninyo ang pagputol* (Please just cut it well)."

That was horrible.

Of course, it was. The bomb was placed in a trash can inside the toilet where we changed costumes. For three years I had trash-can phobia. I couldn't stand the sight of trash cans, even at home.

Ernie Pecho



2ND WEEK
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DAVID ANSEN / NEWSWEEK
Best Actress HILARY SWANK
"Swank's Maggie has a feral intensity that combines with a heartbreaking eagerness and a megawatt smile to devastating effect. She is not an actress for surfacey roles. Her gift is bringing complete believability to the most extreme, most willful and passionate of characters."
KENNETH TURAN / LOS ANGELES TIMES
Best Supporting Actor MORGAN FREEMAN
"You virtually only have to type Morgan Freeman's name and the phrase 'remarkable performance' nearly follows automatically. Freeman doesn't play a part so much as inhabit it."
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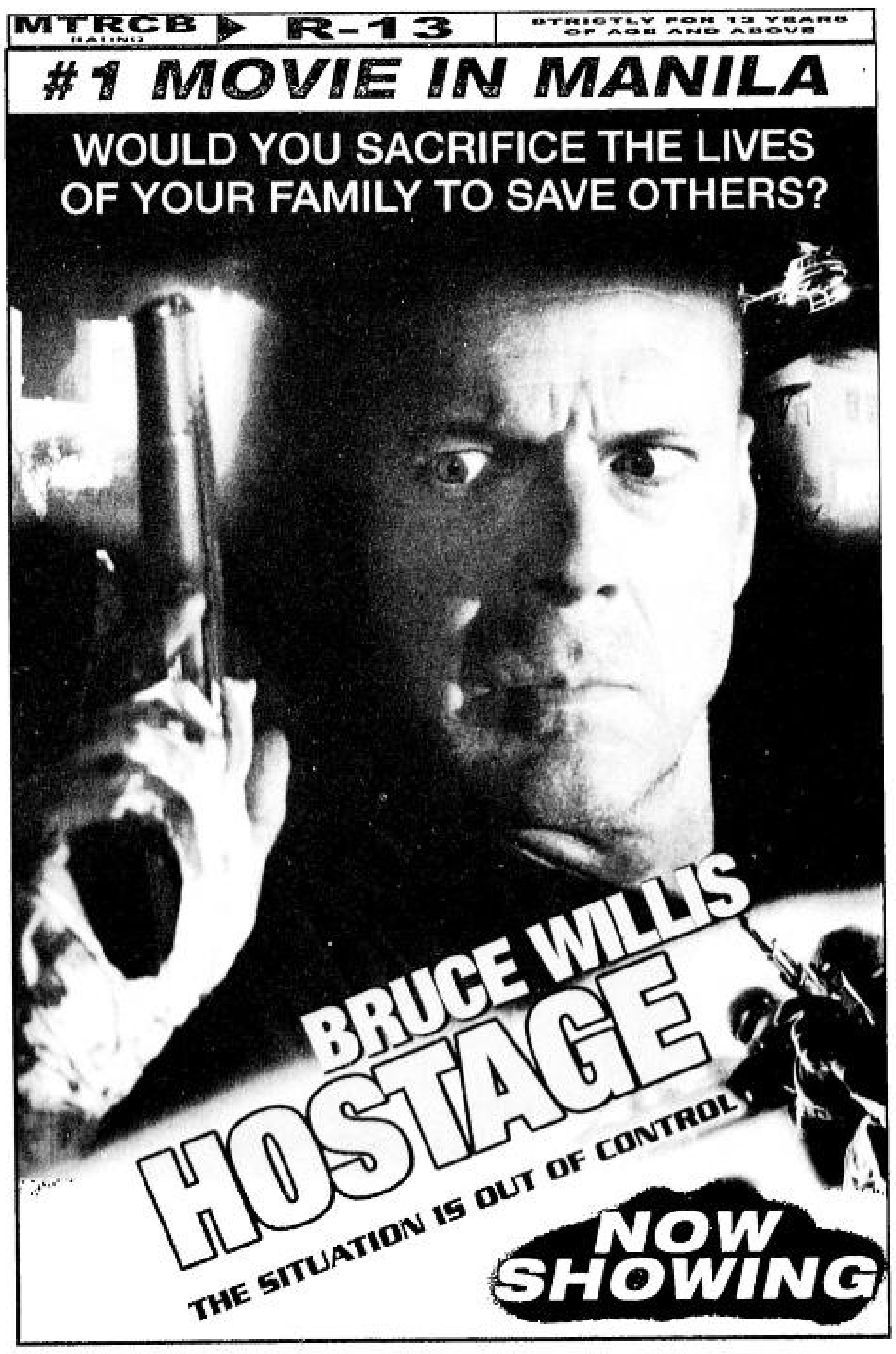

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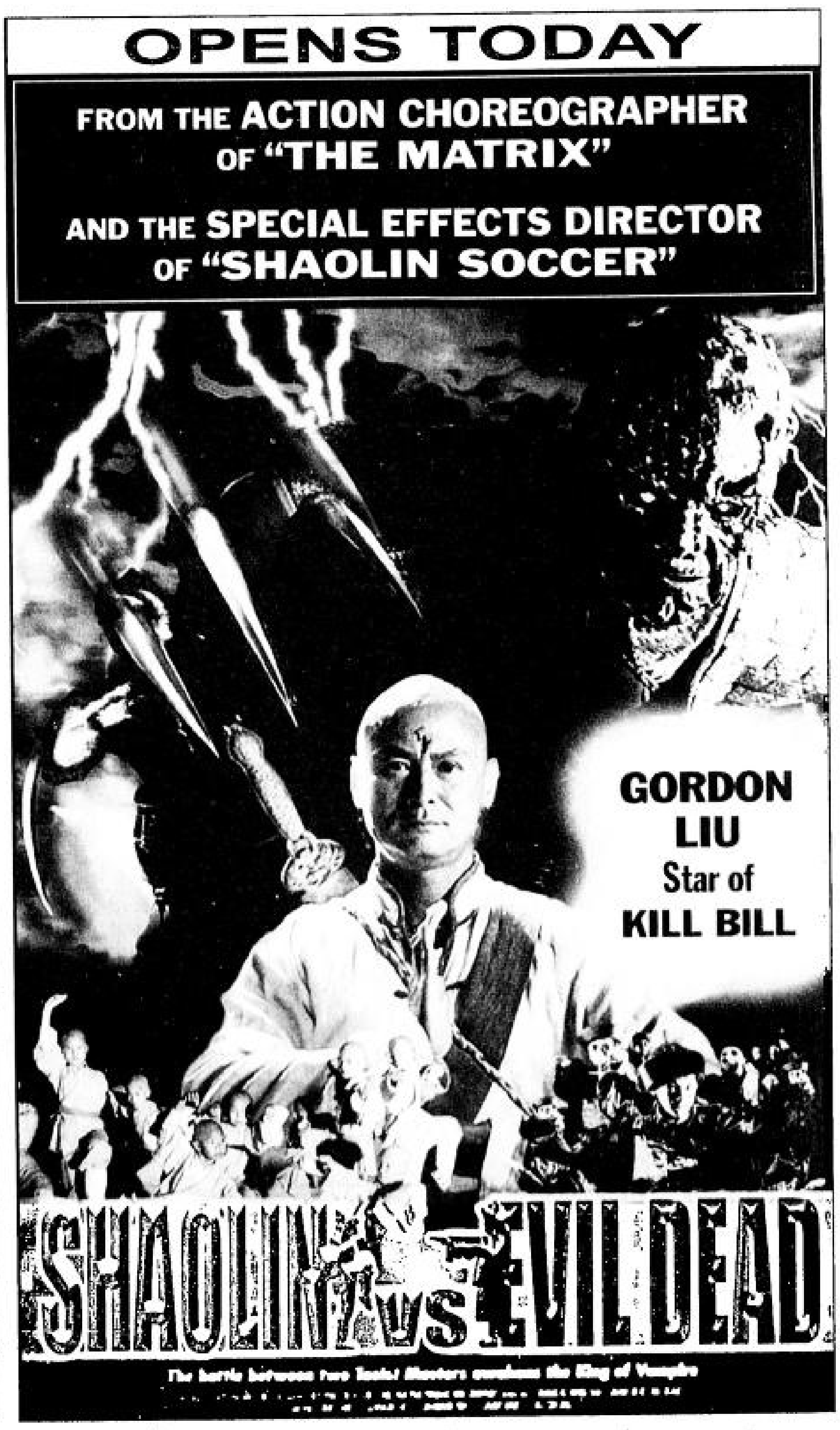

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ENTERTAINMENT

Hard news to break

JUN-JUN Ynares and Andrea Bautista: The big secret's out.

Former Sen. Ramon Revilla asked two things of daughter's fiancé

By Nini Valera

SEN. BONG Revilla is happy to see his younger sister, Andrea Bautista, planning her wedding to longtime boyfriend Jun-Jun Ynares.

Andrea, 30, and Jun-Jun, 32, only son of Rizal Gov. Casimiro Ynares, announced last week that they were getting married late this year. The couple had received the blessing of Andrea's father, former Sen. Ramon Revilla, only the day before. Bong "lawyered" for the couple.

"I had to talk to him before Andrea and Jun-Jun could ask for his blessing," Bong said.

Andrea helps run the family's Imus Productions. Like most celebrity children, she is considered royalty in entertainment circles, so the wedding, set for November, is bound to be a spectacle.

It will be held at the Manila Cathedral, followed by a reception at the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati. The list of sponsors includes President Macapagal-Arroyo and Danding Cojuangco.

Spinster

Bong and Andeng are Revilla's children with his second wife, the late Sena Mortel. Among Revilla's more than 80 children with different women, Andrea is the closest to the patriarch, according to Bong. She takes care of Revilla's food and clothes, and is also his aide at the Philippine Estates Authority, which he chairs.

"Andrea always told my Dad that she would never get married, that she'd rather stay a spinster and take care of him," Bong told INQUIRER Entertainment. "He took the news calmly, but I could see that he was saddened by it."

Andeng earlier planned to tell her father during the family trip to the US this week.

But during Revilla's recent 78th birthday party, news of the wedding broke on television.

The siblings and Jun-Jun decided the matter could no longer wait.

"After Bong talked to him," said Andrea, "my dad called me and Jun-Jun. I didn't have to say anything. I just hugged him."

Jun-Jun said the senator asked two things of him: not to hurt Andrea, and not to make her cry. "I'm sure I can do that," he said.

The two met in 1995 as students of De La Salle University in Cavite. Jun-Jun finished medicine, but after his graduation last year, President Arroyo appointed him general manager of the Laguna Lake Authority. This year, he became Assistant Secretary at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Jun-Jun proposed last Jan. 22 with a 2.5-carat diamond ring—on bended knees.

TAKE FIVE

ZUÑIGA

Memories of terror

FOR SINGING doctor Nonoy Zuñiga, the intermittent rash of violence in the news never fails to bring back memories of his own experience as victim of a bomb attack.

Were you traumatized?

Severely.

What was your immediate reaction upon learning that you lost your right leg?

It's different if you pass out and know about it later. What happened was, I fell due to the impact of the explosion, but I was conscious. I saw my leg go. I tried to get up but I couldn't. I was rushed to the hospital from the [Philippine Plaza]

MEMORIES/ A3-3

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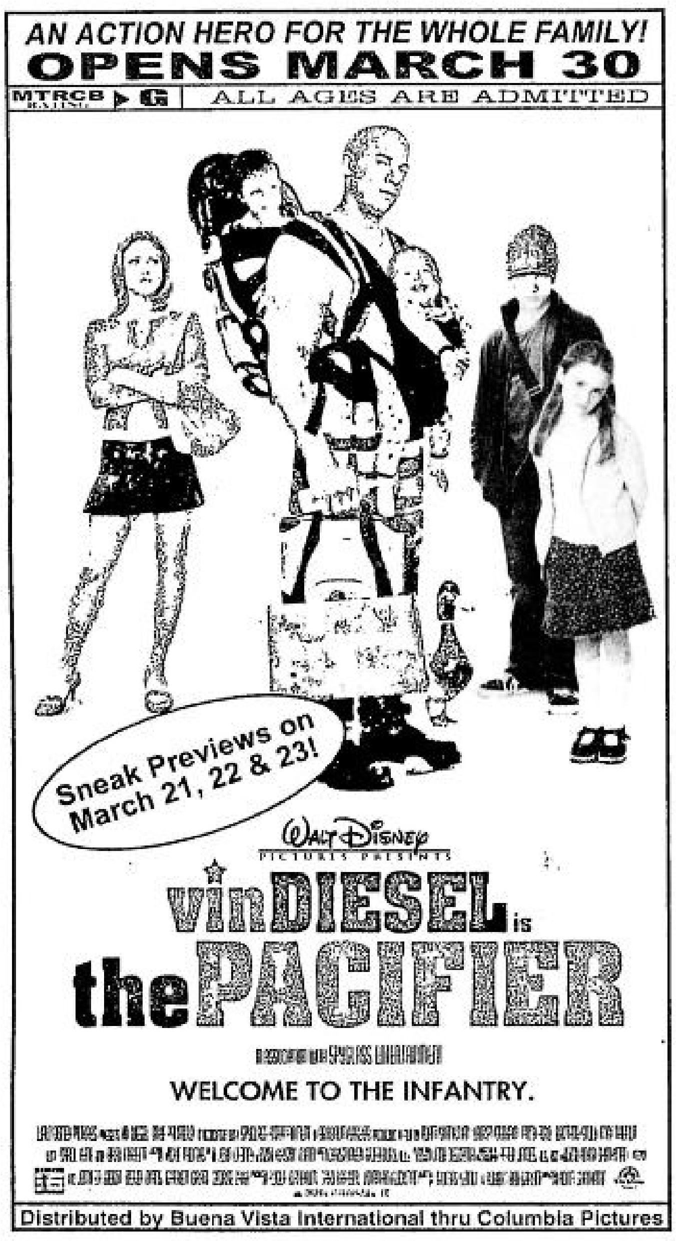

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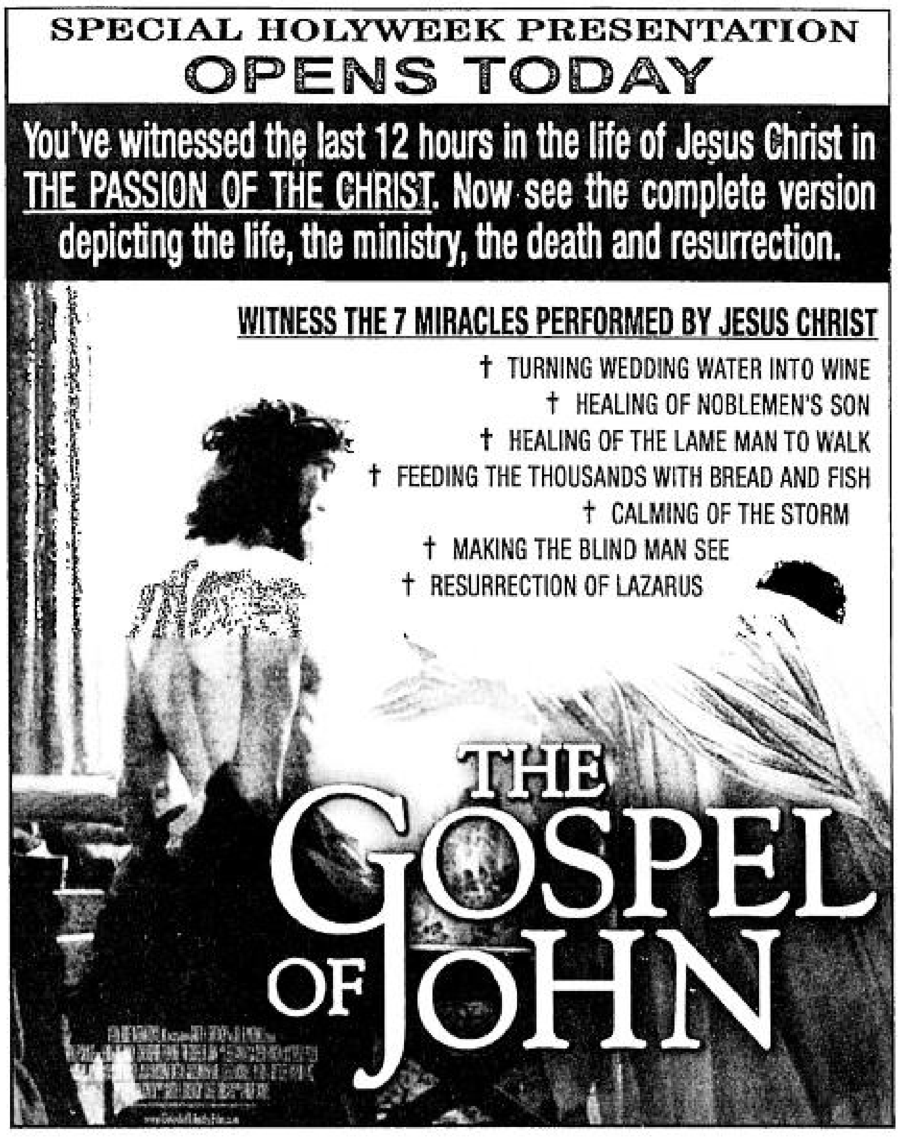

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† MAKING THE BLIND MAN SEE
† RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS

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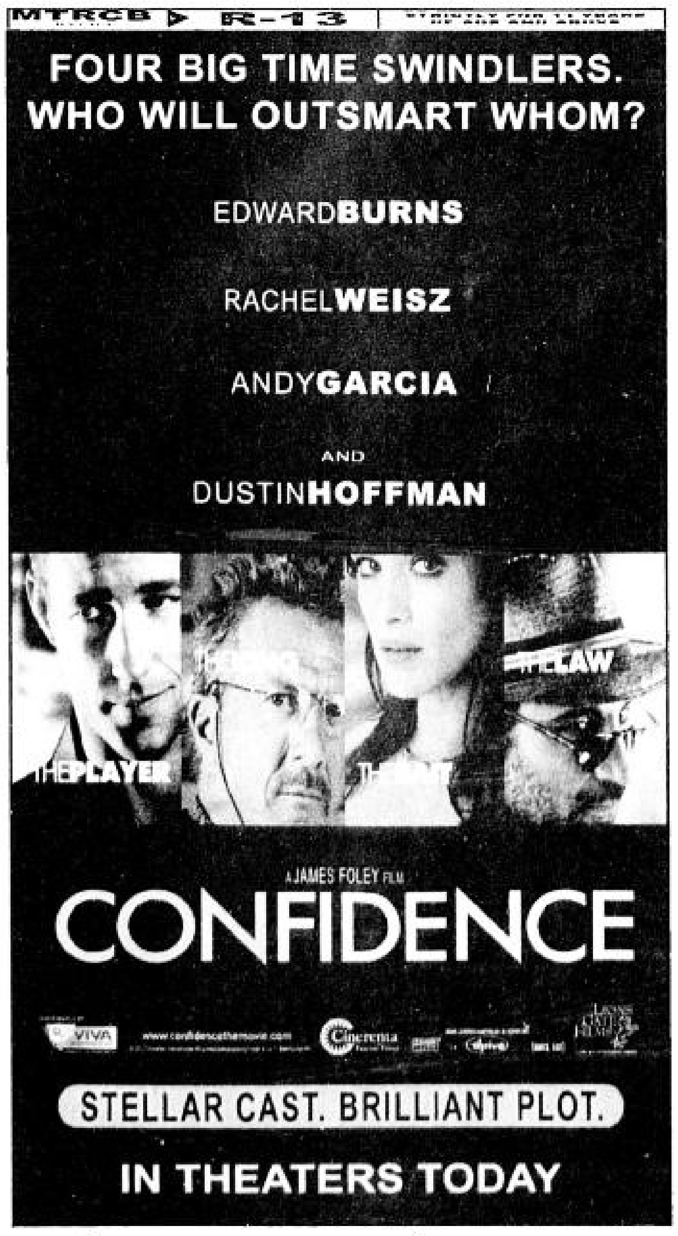

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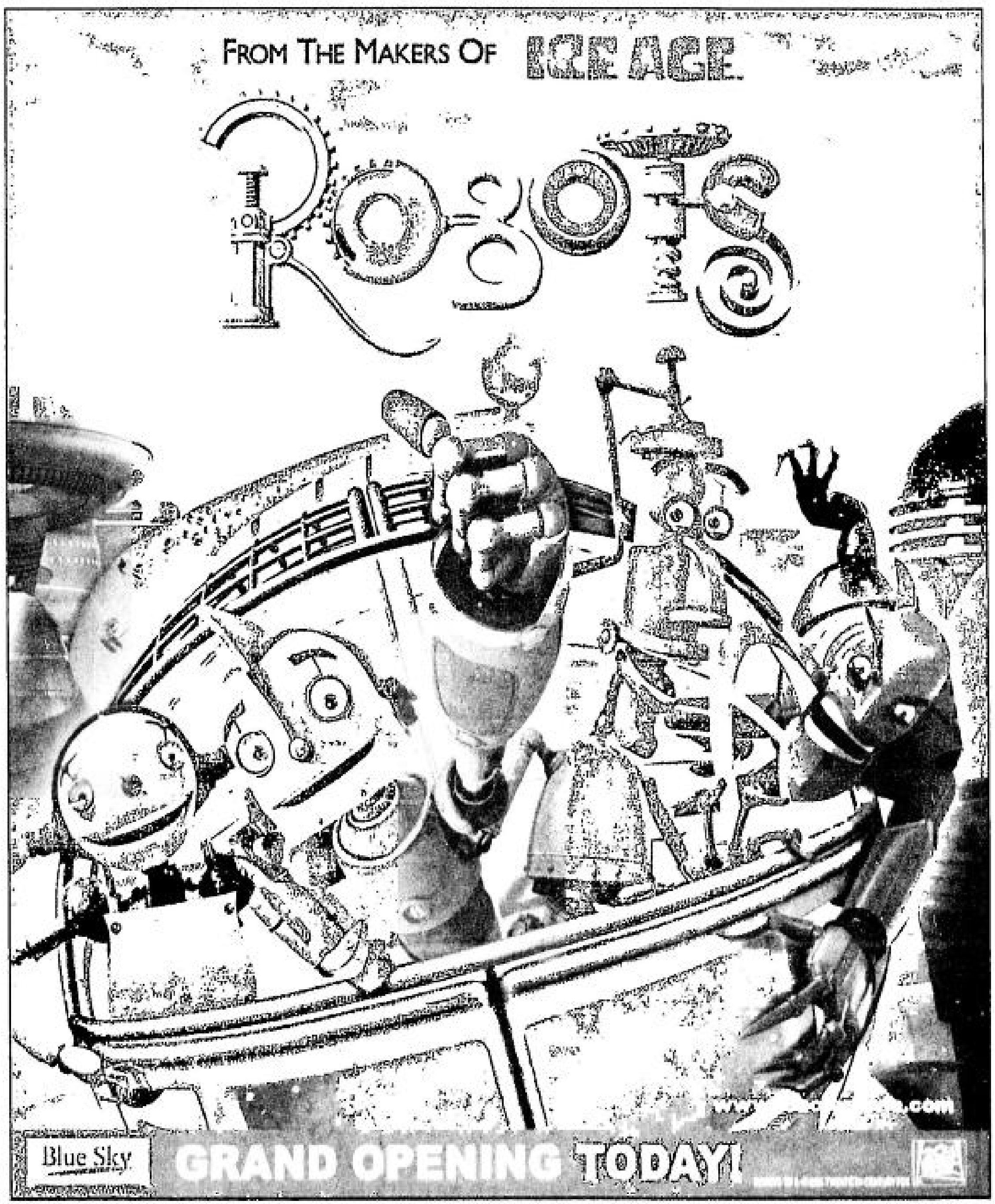

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Jobless rate up to 11.3%

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NUMBER of unemployed Filipinos rose to 4.03 million in January from 3.9 million in the same month last year, as companies in the services and industrial sectors slashed their workforce amid the sluggish economy during the period.

The January 2005 figure, according to the National Statistics Office, represents 11.3 percent of the entire labor force, up from the jobless rate of 10.9 percent in October and 11 percent in January last year.

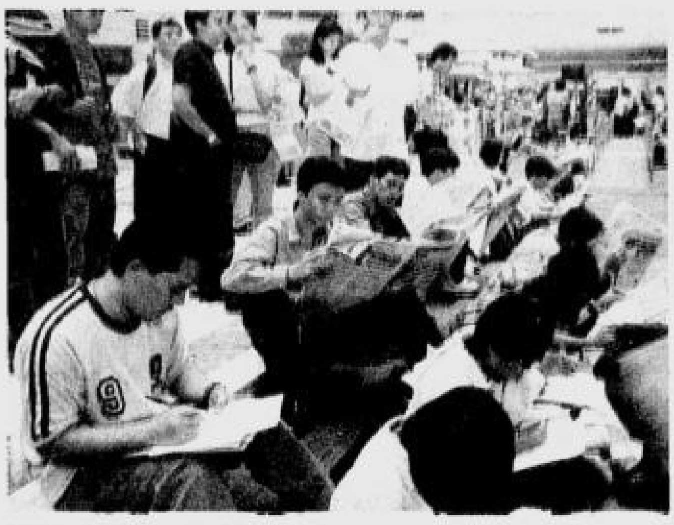
A labor force survey conducted by the NSO showed that the industrial sector sector shed off 73,000 jobs in January this year. The bulk of the jobs lost was accounted for by the food and beverages, textiles, fabricated metal products, and furniture sub-sectors.

For the first time in many years, the services sector failed to generate net new employment. It even registered the loss of 24,000 jobs during the month. The figure was a reversal of the 934,000 jobs it created in January 2004. In this sector, jobs lost were recorded as follow: community, social, and personal services, which lost 116,000 jobs; domestic services, 79,000; public administration, defense and compulsory social security, 42,000, and financial intermediation, 23,000.

Of the three major sectors in the country, only agriculture reported job creation during the month. The farm sector, according to the NSO, generated 185,000 new jobs in January. This resulted in a net job creation of only 87,000 for all three sectors, which compared poorly with the 1.4 million jobs generated in January 2004.

According to Scholastica Cororaton, head of the National Economic and Development Authori-

JOBLESS/ B2

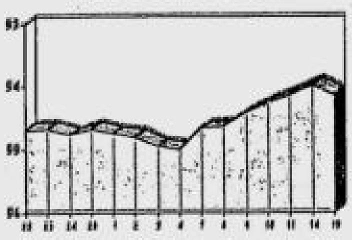


MORE Filipinos are looking for jobs

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



FEBRUARY MARCH

₱ 54.13 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., March 15, 2005

¥ 104.98 = $ 1

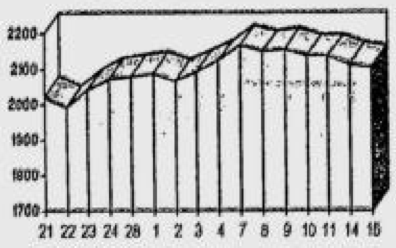
As of 5 p.m., March 15, 2005

GOLD: $440.10-440.60

per ounce Hong Kong, March 15, 2005

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



Stocks end 0.44% lower

SHARE prices yesterday closed 0.44 percent lower as investors again took profits on recent gains which had pushed the market to five year-highs, dealers said.

Sentiment was further dampened by the continued rise in oil prices and by domestic security concerns after a prison revolt by al-Qaida-linked inmates was put down Tuesday after a police assault that left 21 prisoners dead.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index shed 9.30 points to 2,106.31 after trading between 2,101.65 and 2,115.61.

Turnover was 1.34 billion shares worth P8.65 billion, boosted by cross-transactions in Globe Telecom shares.

The broader all-shares index fell 8.17 points to 1,216.13.

Losers beat gainers 56 to 30, with 60 stocks unchanged.

"The market remains in a technical correction. We've been up since December and this is one of those corrections along the way," said Astro del Castillo of First Grade Holdings.

He said attention may have been distracted by the prison revolt but that did not warrant an aggressive sell-off.

"Investors rather focused on the sound fundamentals of the Philippine economy and individual companies, instead of this isolated case," del Castillo said.

Dealers said concerns remain that the death of three top Abu Sayyaf leaders in the police assault may trigger revenge attacks by their colleagues still at large.

Ayala Land was the most actively traded stock, ending unchanged at 9.30 .

Philippine Long Distance Telephone rose P10 to P465. Dealers said investors have started to accumulate the dominant carrier's shares following recent falls. Globe Telecom was unchanged at P905.

SM Prime Holdings fell 10 centavos to P8.60. *AFP*

INTEREST RATES

March 15, 2005-
MART1 Rates

Benchmark Interest Rates	MART 1 15-Mar-05	MART 1 14-Mar-05
1 Month	6.6393	6.7154
3 Months	6.7518	6.8
6 Months	7.7625	7.7857
1 Year	8.5192	8.7767
2 Years	9.5683	9.5758
3 Years	10.36	10.3908
4 Years	10.8631	10.9033
5 Years	11.1133	11.215
7 Years	11.9446	11.96
10 Years	12.37	12.3717
20 Years	12.7867	12.77
25 Years	13.045	13.0533

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The man behind this venture was Mr. Voltaire Arzadon. A Certified Public Accountant by profession, Mr. Arzadon is an academician and doctor of philosophy. Together with his wife, Loreta Coronel, Computronix first operated with just 20 computer units and 14 students.

A year later, an additional 150 students enrolled. And in 1989, this learning institute became known as Computronix Colleges, Inc. However, a fierce earthquake rocked the city in 1990 that left school buildings and business establishments in ruins. Despite this unfortunate incident, the number of students steadily rose. Hence, bigger facilities were needed.

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As it expanded its course offering from computers to other fields of study, Computronix was aptly renamed Colegio de Dagupan, Inc.

Again, through BPI Family Savings Bank's assistance, more buildings were built. These included the LCE Building, a place where the College's HRM students trained. BPI Family Savings Bank also helped Mr. Arzadon venture into the resort business with its world-class Leisure Coast Resort.

Today, Colegio de Dagupan, Inc. belongs to the country's top 1,000 corporations—a feat it would not have achieved without BPI Family Savings Bank fuelling the dreams of a man as enterprising as Mr. Voltaire Arzadon.

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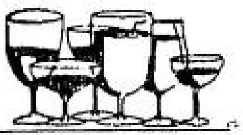
BPI FAMILY SAVINGS BANK

Tagaytay shuffle

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin



HENRY Sy Sr., who carved out what is now known as Prime Highlands out of Belle's Tagaytay Highlands when the latter was teetering under heavy losses, apparently has his sights still trained on the neighboring and much larger mountain resort.

The taipan's privately held Symart Corp. has quietly increased its shareholdings in Belle Corp. to 10.65 percent, from its previous 6.84 percent stake. This is on top of the 5.98 percent block already held by the Sys' publicly listed SM Development Corp.

It is not immediately clear how large the total ownership stake is of the taipan in the leisure property developer; an indication of that is, the Sys control at least five seats in the 11-member Belle board, including that of the acting president/chief operating officer, Rogelio Cabunag.

After Sysmart reported its increased shareholdings, the family of Belle co-vice chair Willy Ocier—his father, Benito Tan Guat, happens to be the Belle chair—followed suit.

Eastern Securities also transferred all in one day last month nearly 275 million nominee shares, equivalent to 4.33 percent of Belle, "to the names of beneficial owners of Eastern Securities," apparently to the Ociers themselves.

Asked if anything was brewing because of these shareholding shuffles, the taipan's heiress-apparent, Teresita Sy, tried to downplay the suggestion, explaining that the Sysmart transfer was part of the house cleaning that her father initiated in Belle some years back.

SM Investment moves

NOW is supposed to be the "quiet period" for SM Investments Corp., where the company should not issue press statements lest it be accused of hyping the company stock preparatory to its listing.

But a disclosure of Banco de Oro yesterday gave some inkling about the market moves of the hitherto private investment vehicle of taipan Henry Sy Sr.

The disclosure reported that SMIC and its subsidiaries Shoemart Inc., SM Development Corp., and Primebridge Holdings controlled 46.45 percent of the bank as of end-January.

By itself, the disclosure meant little. But when compared to previous disclosures, it showed that the SMIC Group had been actively trading BDO shares in the market.

By this time last year, the SMIC Group had about 50.63 percent stake in BDO. By end-2004, the holdings had been reduced to 40.55 percent, before spiking up again this quarter.

Money-go-round

- THREE dailies have been hoodwinked into publishing a fake press release ostensibly from the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., claiming management had awarded top PLDT officers nine months bonus and may also award the rank-and-file a whopping 12-month pay bonanza.

- THE COMPETITION between Globe and Smart continues even abroad. The two telecom companies joined the annual conference of Credit Suisse First Boston in Hong Kong, keeping San Miguel Corp. from attending by itself. The three-firm Philippine delegation happens to be the smallest from among the region, according to one participant.

Heard through the grapevine

A SERIES of quiet investigations into the Judiciary Development Fund, for which the opposition tried to impeach Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., has confirmed a number of collection shortfalls, all mainly having to do with various clerks of courts, who act as collection agents for their respective branches, dipping their hands into the till.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

Jobless . . .

From page B1

ty's policy and planning division, the increase in the unemployment rate had to do with the sharp increase in consumer prices beginning the second half of 2004.

She said there had been decreases in employment among businesses related to trade, hotels and restaurants, communication and storage, transportation, renting and real estate—which composed 65 percent of the services sector—because of weak sales caused by inflation. Inflation hit 8.4 in January, way above the 5- to 6-percent target for the whole of 2005.

"People were trying to economize because of high prices," Cororaton said in a telephone interview. She also said less number of families engaged the services of domestic helpers and of transportation because of steep increase in oil prices.

The unemployment rate hike prodded the Neda to push for programs that would attract the entry of more investments. Economic Planning Secretary and Neda Director General Romulo Neri said the government should intensify its efforts to solve its fiscal problems and improve infrastructure in the country, two of the major factors that discourage inflow of investments.

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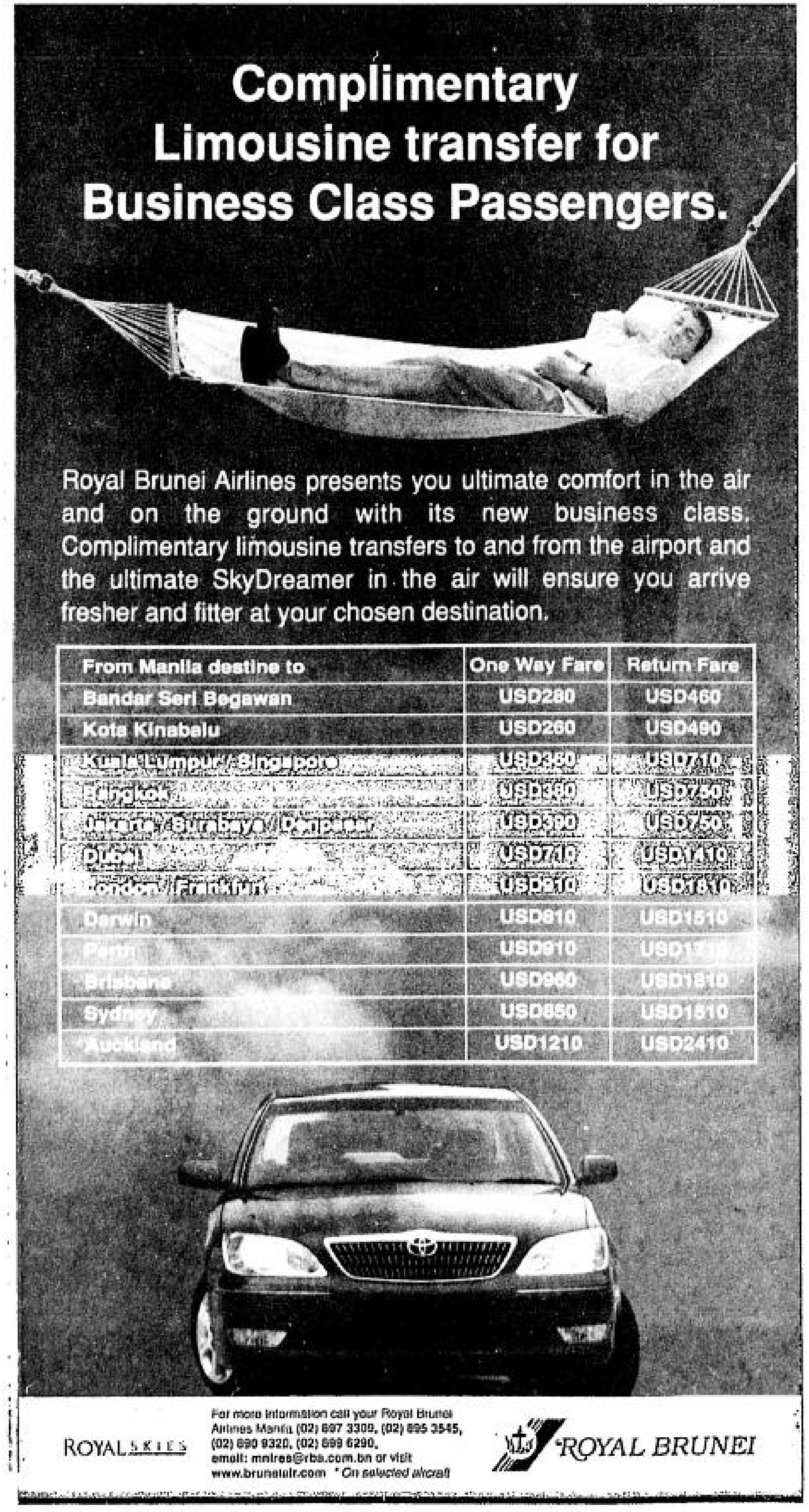

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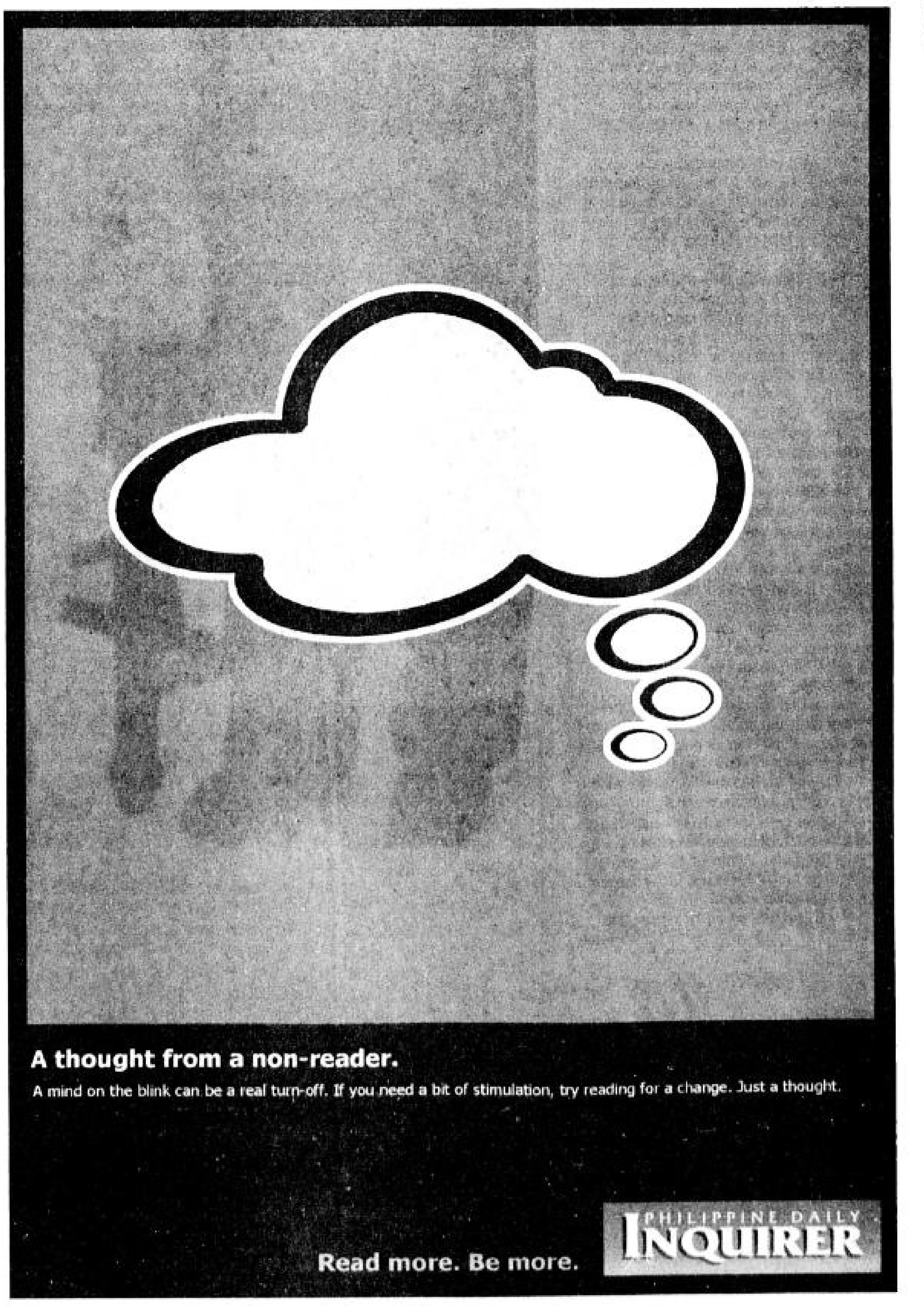

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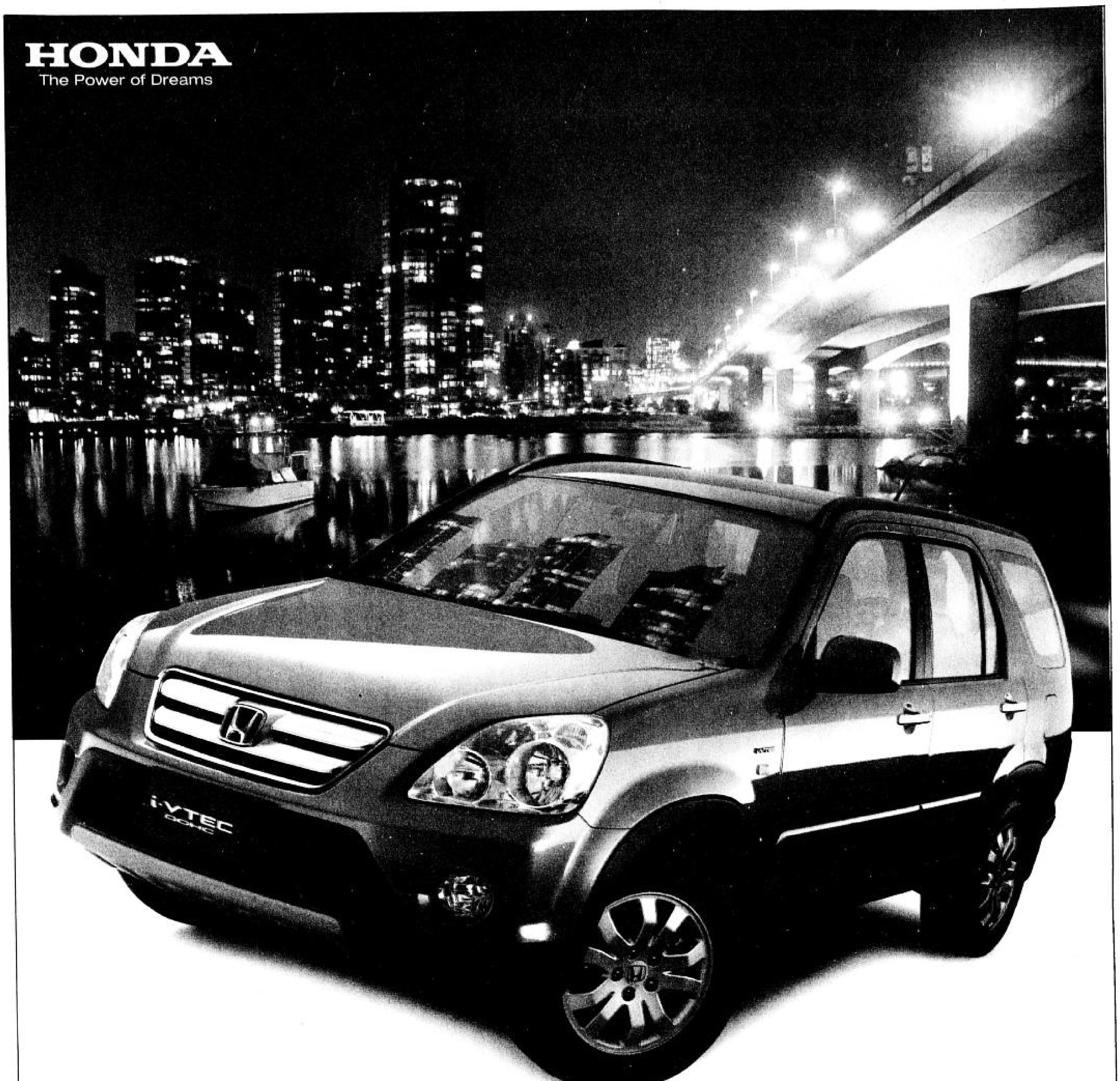

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Benguet seeks partners for $1.3B worth of projects

By Ronnel W. Domingo

MINING firm Benguet Corp. is in talks with several foreign firms on possible joint ventures in four development and exploration projects worth a total of $1.38 billion.

Company president and chief executive officer Benjamin Philip G. Romualdez said in an interview that talks were in progress between Benguet and two Canadian firms, a Japanese firm and a Chinese company on the $850-million development of the Sta. Cruz nickel laterite prospect in Zambales.

Benguet Corp. earlier entered into an agreement with Japanese firms Sumitomo Metal Mining Corp. and Sojitz Corp. on the further exploration of the Sta. Cruz area.

Data from the company show that Sta. Cruz has at least 11 million metric tons of proven reserves of laterite ore with 1.68 percent nickel content and 0.05 percent cobalt.

The area is also seen as having 0.9 million tons of probable laterite ore reserves with the same composition.

Romualdez said the company was also looking for a partner for the development of the KingKing porphyry copper-cold prospect in Compostela Valley.

Experts explain that "porphyry" refers to "a large-tonnage, relatively low-grade copper-gold deposit containing very large copper and gold resources, which could be [mined in bulk]."

The KingKing prospect is expected to have a mine life of 13 years and is believed to hold 353 million metric tons of ore reserves. Further, Romualdez said Benguet Corp. was in discussions with possible partners in the exploration of two gold prospects, one in Luzon and another in Mindanao.

He said the two exploration projects would require up to $30 million in investment.

Romualdez, who is also president of the Chamber of Mines in the Philippines, said earlier that the group had started international promotional activities for 37 new mining areas that could attract up to $555 million in new investments.

PSALM sets bidding for Bataan plant

By Abigail L. Ho

THE POWER Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) has started the bidding process for the mothballed 225-megawatt (MW) Bataan Thermal Power Plant in Limay, the third National Power Corp. decommissioned plant to be placed on the auction block.

In an invitation to bid published yesterday, PSALM privatization, bids and awards committee chair and outgoing Energy Secretary Vincent Perez said interested bidders had up to 5 p.m. of March 28 to express their intent to participate in the auction by submitting formal letters of interest.

Due diligence will follow from March 22 to April 22. A pre-bidding conference will be held on March 31.

The deadline for the submission of bids has been scheduled for April 28.

Interested parties, before they can obtain a bidding package, should first execute a confidentiality agreement and pay a non-refundable participation fee of $500.

All prospective bidders are required to post a bid security equivalent to 10 percent of their total bid in the form of an irrevocable letter of credit from a PSALM-accredited reputable local bank.

For this auction, PSALM will be using the single-stage, two-envelope bidding system.

PSALM decided to start the year with the auction of Napocor's non-operational plants. First to be placed on the auction block was the 200-MW Manila Thermal Power Plant, which, PSALM vice president for asset valuation and disposal Froilan Tampinco said was being eyed by three foreign and two local entities.

The actual auction for the said plant has yet to take place.

Sun blames Smart for connection failures

By Clarissa S. Batino

DIGITAL Telecommunication Phils. (Digitel) has complained to the National Telecommunications Commission about the high incidence of failure of calls and text messages from Sun Cellular to Smart phones.

In a letter to the NTC dated March 9, Digitel said 89 percent of Sun Cellular calls to Smart phones failed to connect. Also, it said that text messages sent through Sun Cellular phones to Smart phones were not received.

Between the peak hours of March 1 and 6, almost 25 percent of text messages from Sun to Smart failed while 40 percent of messages from Smart to Sun also did not go through.

"About 89 percent of outgoing calls from Sun to Smart were rejected by Smart due to 'unavailability of circuit/channel,'" said Digitel senior vice president William Pamintuan.

Sun Cellular is the trade name of Digitel Mobile Phils. Inc., a unit of Digitel.

Smart head of legal department Rogelio Quevedo said Sun Cellular should not blame other networks for its owns problems.

"Sun Cellular's network is really congested. Now they are blaming us for their own congestion," said Quevedo.

Pamintuan said Digitel had asked Smart to activate five additional signaling links last Dec. 17 due to the SMS congestion experienced at that time. Smart has yet to act on the request, he said.

"These intermittent voice call and SMS links failure have been adversely affecting our network efficiency to the detriment and prejudice of our Sun Cellular subscribers," the Digitel official said.

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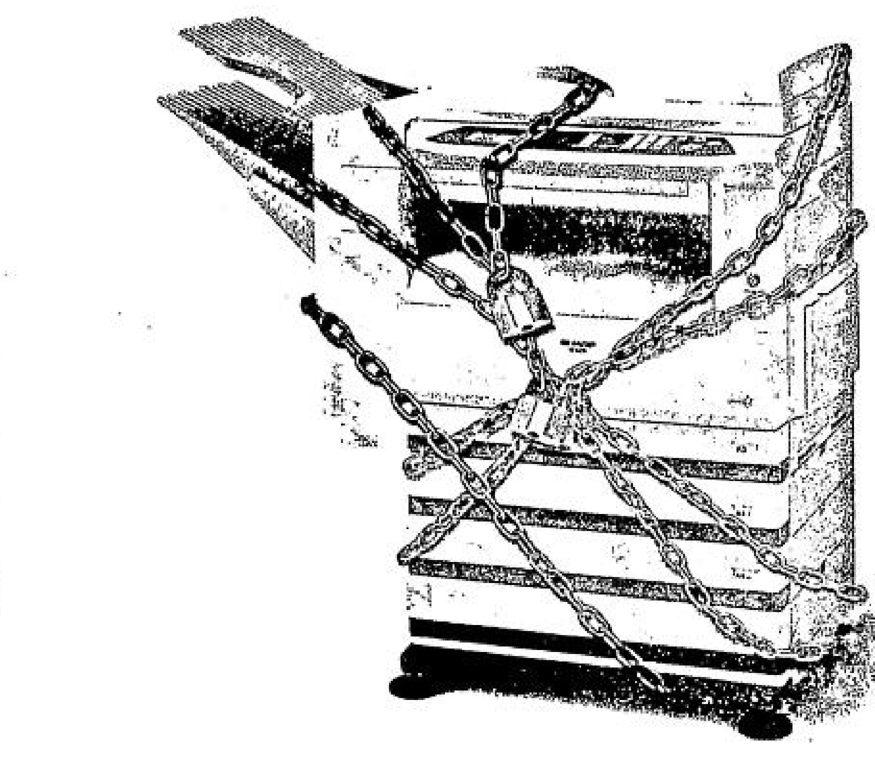

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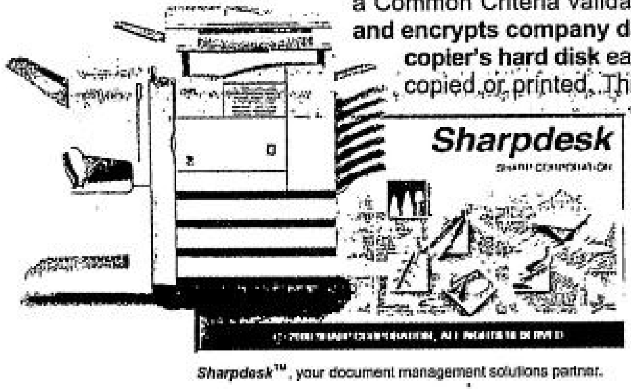

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THIRD PARTY CUSTODIANSHIP

BTr exec willing to submit to probe

By Michelle V. Remo

NEWLY appointed National Treasurer Omar Cruz said he was willing to defend before a Senate investigation the third-party custody system, denying that the program would weaken the government's fiscal standing and open the securities trade to private sector profiteering.

"Third-party custody is an international best practice that investors want to have," he said in an interview held right after Monday night's induction of the 2005 officers of the Economic Journalists Association of the Philippines.

Omar said critics of the third-party custody system did understand the benefits the system had to offer.

Setting up such a system was key step to developing the country's anemic capital market, he stressed.

Cruz said he would conduct a formal dialogue with his subordinates in the Bureau of Treasury who are against the third-party custody rule.

He added that he was very much willing to explain to the senators how the third-party custody system would work and benefit the domestic capital market.

In a privilege speech on Monday, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. called for an investigation of the third-party custody system being pushed by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

The senator criticized the BSP for pushing for the third-party custody system, and the Department of Finance for replacing former National Treasurer Norma Lasala.

Lasala was reportedly sacked for expressing her strong opposition to the system.

Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima personally picked Cruz, a supporter of the third-party custody system, to replace Lasala.

Echoing Lasala's position, Pimentel said the third-party custody system would increase the cost of government's borrowings.

He said investors would want to recover the cost of service fees charged by third-party custodians by asking for higher interest rates for the government securities.

Under the system, fixed-income securities sold under repurchase agreements—where dealer-banks agree to buy back the securities after a certain period—are required to be placed in third-party custodians.

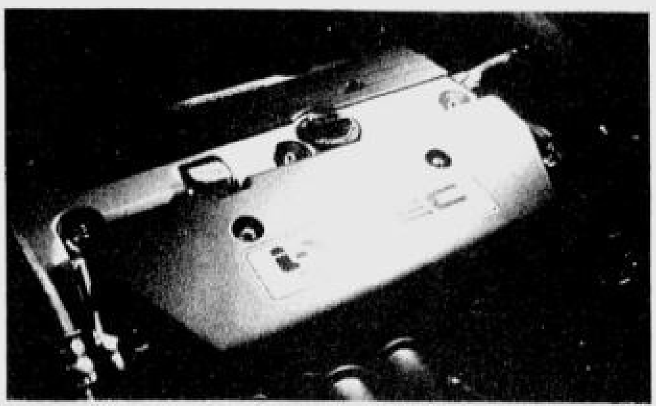
Fixed-income securities sold under an outright sale transaction—where there is no buy-back agreement between dealers and investors—are not required but are still encouraged to be placed in third-party custodians.

This will therefore take away one of the Bureau of Treasury's core function, which is to take custody of sold government securities.

Currently, there are six accredited third-party custodians, namely, Standard Chartered Bank, Bank of the Philippine Islands, Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corp., Deutsche Bank, Citibank, and Philippine Depository & Trust Corp.

On Jan. 3, the BSP issued Circulars No. 392 and 428 that would set up and implement the system. The BSP said having third-party custodians of securities—both issued by the government and the private sector—would prevent fraudulent sale of debt instruments.

"Third-party custodians are necessary in developing the capital market," Cruz said. "It's what will bring in investors."



THE NEW and better Honda CRV with a 2.4-liter DOHC i-VTEC engine capable of delivering 160 horsepower.

Honda Phils. unveils new CRV lineup

HONDA Cars Philippines Inc., yesterday unveiled the new 2005 CRV model lineup.

The CRV is best-selling SUV in the Philippines. The 2005 model has been given a fresher look and stronger powerplant to take on the expanding Philippine SUV market.

The new CRV comes with a new 2.4-liter DOHC i-VTEC engine, capable of delivering 160 horsepower.

The engine is mated to an electronically controlled 5-speed automatic transmission, aiding fuel economy and performance.

It also showcases a new Drive-by-Wire throttle that ensures a smoother and instantaneous response to accelerator pedal inputs, particularly from standstill.

The new Real-Time 4WD vastly improves performance and responds better to dynamic driving styles.

Honda's Real Time four-wheel drive system, which automatically engages all-wheel drive only when required, now delivers better road handling and hill climbing performance on slippery surfaces, as well as a swifter response when accelerating around corners or turning out of slippery intersections.

The new CRV features a more aggressive styling to boost its refined toughness.

The 2005 model has a new chrome front grille, cylindrical-shaped headlights, new taillights and body-colored front and rear bumper design giving it a bolder and more solid appearance.

Newly designed foglamps, hard spare tire cover, chrome door handles, and body colored side mirrors are now fitted as standard in the new CRV.

Along with the new exterior elements of the CRV, 16-inch alloy-wheels also fill out the flared guards.

The CRV also boasts of a higher level of standard equipment within.

Audio on the CRV has been upgraded to a new 6-CD stereo with MP3.

The CRV's digital trip display includes self-illuminating meter with fuel consumption gauge. The interior has been significantly enhanced for higher luxury, comfort and convenience. These includes enlarged climate control switches, large storage compartments for both driver and side passenger, chrome touches, door lining with book storage and new metallic panel.

In addition, all models now features a newly designed AT shift lever for a more comfortable grip. Honda has improved rear visibility by introducing a new shape rear headrest in the second row to avoid obscuring rearward vision when fully retracted.

In keeping with Honda's commitment to environment preservation, the new CRV complies with the stringent EURO4 emissions standard.

The new CRV comes in four-wheel drive (4WD) and two-wheel drive (2WD) variants.

The local Honda export plan has to go through tough competition among other Honda factories in the Asean region, which are all keen at exporting their own models.

Export proposal from the Philippines will be evaluated against the other countries in terms of quality, cost and delivery.

With low domestic market support, HCPI is having difficulty competing against other Asean countries in terms of cost efficiency.

Nevertheless, HCPI will continue to develop its export plan for the Philippines, despite anticipated delays.

Recently, President Macapagal-Arroyo and Honda officials broke ground for the P1.3 billion new manufacturing facility at the First Philippine Industrial Park in Tanauan, Batangas.

With the expanding motorcycle market and strong domestic demand, Honda is shifting its motorcycle manufacturing from Bicutan to the new 20-hectare property in Tanauan.

Honda officials were also optimistic that, in the near future, they would be able to export the bulk of the 500,000 motorcycle units produced at the factory each year.

Honda sold 230,000 units of two-wheelers in 2004, with an expected sales volume of 300,000 units in 2005.

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DA seen to miss rice target in '05

By Christine A. Gaylican

ECONOMISTS are skeptical that the Department of Agriculture (DA) will be able to maintain its high rice production target of 15.1 million metric tons for 2005.

An expert from the University of Asia and the Pacific said that the government's rice production target might be unattainable because of the occurrence of the El Niño weather phenomenon this year.

Already, rice planting had slowed down in some parts of Luzon.

Dr. Rolando Dy, UA&P economist, said that the DA's target was "highly challenging" and could be compounded by the limited government budget.

He cited the drastic effects of the weather phenomenon, which might result in the scarcity of water for irrigation. He also mentioned the expensive fertilizer prices on farmers' output.

"This is a big challenge for the DA," Dy said. "The question is, how efficient are they [DA officials] in making the program operational? [Can they see to the] timely distribution of seeds and fertilizers? Can it be supported by the right flow of funds?"

The DA has been given a reenacted budget of P14.9 billion. Some P500 million will be given to the so-called Ginintuang Masaganang Ani (GMA) rice program.

But according to Frisco Malabanan, Rice Program director, the rice production target could be reached. He said 214,000 hectares would soon be planted with the high-yielding hybrid rice variety.

"We believe the additional areas planted with hybrid rice are more than enough to compensate for the areas lost due to the mild El Niño here in Luzon," Malabanan told the INQUIRER. "The harvests in Mindanao are good so far."

He added that the DA would continue to offer fertilizer discount coupons at 10 percent on every bag of fertilizer purchased from the Philippine Phosphate Fertilizer Corp. (Philphos).

A Philphos bag costs P900.

According to another government agency, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB), the water level at the main reservoir Angat Dam is nearing the critical stage. Officials said that farmers in Pampanga and Bulacan might not have enough water for crop irrigation.

According to Ramon B. Alikpala, NWRB executive director, those that will be affected are farmers who ignored the agency's advisory not to plant beyond Jan. 15.

"We already asked the National Irrigation Administration to just finish the cropping cycle and to discourage planting after Jan. 15 since water will definitely be inadequate, even with the reduction of water supply to Metro Manila households," Alikpala said.

Angat's water level now stands at 187.75 meters, or about 7.75 meters above the critical level for farmers.

DR. DANIEL Yap of the General Santos Doctors Hospital browses through a computer in a learning facility put up by Merck Sharp and Dohme Philippines. Ten such facilities have been built to aid medical practitioners hone their craft.

Providing learning tools for doctors

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

CORPORATE CITIZEN

A MEDICAL doctor can never be too good at saving lives.

Every day, new symptoms, diseases and epidemics emerge to challenge what doctors learned in school or in the hospitals where they took up residency.

This is why pharmaceutical firm Merck Sharp and Dohme Philippines set up MSD Resource Centers to ensure that local doctors are kept abreast of the latest developments in the medical world.

These come at no cost to the doctors, and even medical students. They just have to make the time and effort to go in, sit down, and make the most out of the center.

Learning facilities

Christine Liwanag, corporate affairs director of MSD, said in an interview that the company decided to invest in MSDs because it believed in supporting the doctors' desire to provide the best care to their patients.

"We believe that a center like this is something that Filipino doctors really need," Liwanag said. "So instead of putting our money in other programs, we put it here where we feel we can genuinely help in continuing medical education."

These resource centers are learning facilities, with between five and 30 computer terminals, that give doctors access to the latest medical information from Merck's extensive library of medical journals, modules and books.

The centers have a CD-ROM collection that contains updates in specialty fields, such as cardiology, nephrology, endocrinology, pulmonology, infectious diseases and urology.

The MSD Resource Centers also come with audio/video equipment, slides and medical tapes that doctors can use for their case presentations and discussions.

The centers can also double as conference facilities for scientific meetings and seminars, case presentations, patient care lectures and continuing medical education programs.

Understanding that not all doctors are adept at using the computer and the Internet, MSD employed trained officers to man the centers.

These officers help doctors make the most of what the centers can offer, by guiding them through the literature search and teaching them how to use the audio/video facilities.

Virtual rounds

The officers come in handy, especially when the centers are used for the MRC Virtual Grand Rounds, a medical net meeting that allows physicians to collaborate and interact with fellow doctors from other parts of the country through the Internet.

These meetings, conducted by different hospitals and academic institutions, allow the doctors to discuss various patient conditions and cases, giving them all a better understanding of what to do to help their patients.

During the third Virtual Grand Rounds hosted by the University of Sto. Tomas Hospital, some 180 doctors nationwide got together to discuss neutropenia—a condition characterized by the lack of infection-fighting neutrophils—in patients with impaired immune systems.

Providing information has always been at the heart of Merck's global operations, and it has been publishing texts for the medical and scientific professions for over 100 years.

It published the first edition of The Merck Index, the definitive reference for chemicals and drugs, in 1889. The Merck Manual Home Edition, the portable home medical reference, came out in 1997.

These publications are published and sold at cost.

Crucial

The first MSD Resource Center on Padre Faura Street was put up in 1996. Since then, the network has grown to 10, the biggest of which is housed in the Philippine General Hospital. The MSD also has four satellite offices.

The other centers are in the Batangas Medical Society Bldg., JRG Building in Cebu, Davao Doctors Hospital, Davao Medical Center, Makati Medical Center, Philippine Heart Center, Philippine Orthopedic Center and UST.

Providing the latest information is crucial, Liwanag said, because there are always new and better ways of providing medical care.

Through the center, this information is but a click away from the medical practitioners, who can also share their knowledge with others.

"The centers are there for the advancement of the doctors' ability to take care of their patients," Liwanag said.

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HYUNDAI
Drive your way

GMA 7 prepays ₱1.9-B loan

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

TELEVISION giant GMA Network said it was now debt free after paying its P1.9-billion five-year term loan, eight months ahead of its November due date.

Using internally-generated funds, GMA Network paid a total of more than P543 million in principal and interest last Feb. 28.

The P1.9-billion facility drawn in 2000 allowed GMA Network to beef up its war chest to close to P1 billion, which paved the way for the upgrading of its facilities and infrastructure support.

The company does not need to conduct an initial public offering to sustain its continuous expansion because it has enough internally-generated funds, GMA Network chair Felipe Gozon said in a statement.

GMA Network has approved a capital expenditure worth more than P600 million for 2005. This does not include the capital expenditure requirement of its international channel and channel 11.

Among the projects in the pipeline are the launching of GMA Network's International Channel in the United States this year and the on-going upgrading of transmitter and other facilities in key cities across the country. The upgrade aims to improve the network's signal and reach to gain leadership in ratings in the provinces.

The company's subsidiary, Citynet, has also entered into a co-production and blocktime agreement with Zoe Broadcasting Network, which provides a new platform for GMA to showcase more innovative shows.

The company has also completed its P180.2-million broadcast automation systems project that will improve the Network's broadcast capabilities both here and overseas.

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DISCLOSURES

INTERNATIONAL Container Terminal Services Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Apr. 21 at 10 a.m. at Rigodon Ballroom of the Peninsula Manila. Record date is March 15.

* * *

ASIAN Terminals Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Apr. 28, 2 p.m. at Visayas Ballroom, Westin Philippine Plaza, CCP Complex, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City. Record date is March 29.

* * *

SOUTH China Resources Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 20, 2 p.m. at William McKinley Room A & B of the Manila Polo Club, Forbes Park, Makati City. Record date is March 31.

* * *

MABUHAY Vinyl Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Apr. 28, 3 p.m. at the Makati Sports Club, LP Leviste St., Salcedo Village, Makati City.

* * *

BHI Holdings Inc. rescheduled their annual stockholders' meeting from May 27 to Dec. 21.

* * *

IPEOPLE Inc. declared a cash dividend of P0.16 per share to all shareholders of record date as of April 4. Payment will be made on Apr. 28.

* * *

TRANS-Asia Oil and Energy Development Corp. approved a 4-percent cash dividend and special cash dividend for shareholders of record as of March 30 and payable on April 12. The board also approved 30 percent stock dividend and an increase in the authorized capital stock from P1 billion to P2 billion, subject to the approval of the stockholders on April 12.

* * *

JOLLIBEE Foods Corp. announced that an additional 253,174 shares were exercised and fully paid under the Company's Stock Option Plan, bringing the total number of Treasury shares to 29,575,230.

* * *

ISLAND Information and Technology Inc. filed the Registration Statement and Listing Application for the Stock Rights Offering. ***Compiled by Chona Galang, PDI Research***

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 15, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.3	29,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	29.5	30.5	29.5	30.5	670,400
Bank of the Phil. Islands	57.5	58	57.5	57.5	658,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	49	49.5	49	49.5	8,700
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.87	0.87	0.85	0.85	8,260,000
International Exch. Bank	19.25	19.25	19	19	10,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	37.5	37.5	36	37	710,200
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14.25	14.5	14.25	14.5	61,000
Security Bank Corp.	31	31	31	31	100
Union Bank of the Phil.	33	33.5	33	33.5	25,500
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	20,000
First Abacus Financial	0.53	0.55	0.53	0.55	90,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	260	270	260	260	30
Manulife Financial Corp.	2500	2505	2500	2500	720
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	2.44	2.44	2.42	2.44	255,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	150	155	150	155	21,050
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1710	1740	1710	1740	680
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	17	17.25	17	17	49,200
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.32	1.34	5,011,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	905	905	905	905	33,240
Ipeople Inc.	5.3	5.4	5.3	5.4	253,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.0575	0.06	0.0575	0.0575	48,900,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.0575	0.06	0.0575	0.06	11,500,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.08	2.08	2.06	2.08	4,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.55	3.65	3.55	3.65	4,651,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1460	1470	1455	1465	133,850
Ivantage Corp.	0.78	0.78	0.78	0.78	360,000
Philweb Corp.	0.022	0.022	0.021	0.022	140,200,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	20.5	20.5	20.25	20.25	57,600
Manila Electric Co. B	29.5	30	29.5	30	1,061,500
Petron Corp.	4.25	4.3	4.15	4.15	1,837,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.48	1.66	1.48	1.56	2,107,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.94	1.94	1.9	1.9	150,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	8.5	8.5	8.4	8.4	212,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.64	0.64	0.63	0.63	60,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	10,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.69	0.7	1,430,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.15	4.15	4	4.1	5,196,000
Republic Cement Corp.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	15,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	6,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	16,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	28	28.5	28	28.5	203,200
RFM Corp.	1.04	1.04	1	1.02	1,964,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.42	0.42	0.4	0.4	30,000
San Miguel Corp. A	56	56.5	56	56.5	103,400
San Miguel Corp. B	83	83	82.5	82.5	146,600
Universal Robina Corp.	12.25	12.25	12.25	12.25	7,700
Vitarich Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	500,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	119,700,000
Ayala Corp.	8.2	8.2	8	8.1	8,298,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.67	0.67	0.65	0.65	400,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	872,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	10.75	11	10.75	11	15,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.05	0.0525	0.05	0.05	9,100,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.34	2.36	2.34	2.34	294,000
APC Group Inc.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	460,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	19,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	100,000
Aries Prime Res. Inc.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	4,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	20,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	150,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	26	26	25.5	26	66,500
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.185	0.185	2,960,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.28	1.3	1.28	1.28	7,350,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1	1	1	1	520,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	30,000
Cadp Group Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	20,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.29	0.3	0.28	0.29	6,520,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.52	390,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	4.15	4.25	4.15	4.15	3,903,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	6,300,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.68	1.68	1,453,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	10.25	10.5	10.25	10.5	31,700
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	60	60	59.5	60	232,400
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.27	0.3	0.27	0.28	800,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.125	0.13	0.125	0.13	11,320,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.94	1.94	1.94	1.94	50,000
Ionics Inc.	1.68	1.68	1.68	1.68	25,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	4	4	3.95	3.95	76,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.14	2.18	138,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	1,000,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.018	0.019	0.018	0.019	2,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1,055,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	100,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	75,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.52	0.52	0.52	0.52	80,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.57	0.58	0.56	0.58	16,970,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	310,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	1,330,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.14	1.14	1.1	1.12	649,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	100,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.78	0.9	0.78	0.85	1,230,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	4.4	4.4	4	4	46,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.195	0.195	0.195	0.195	1,670,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	950,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.36	0.36	800,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Active Alliance Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	60,000
Metro Alliance Hldgs B	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56	10,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.62	1.62	1.6	1.62	260,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.135	0.155	0.135	0.155	570,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1.6	1.64	1.58	1.58	2,562,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.14	1.16	1.14	1.14	1,924,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.62	1.64	1.58	1.58	3,911,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	40,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-Cbn Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	16.75	17	16.75	17	73,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	100
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	6.8	6.8	6.7	6.7	16,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.3	9.4	9.3	9.3	26,302,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.14	1.14	1.14	1.14	51,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32	960,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.34	0.34	2,340,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.57	0.57	0.56	0.56	4,700,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.92	1.94	1.9	1.9	574,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.38	2.42	2.38	2.42	40,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	20,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.31	0.31	0.3	0.3	1,430,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76	450,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.195	0.195	0.19	0.19	2,190,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	4.7	4.75	4.7	4.75	563,000
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	350,000
SM Development Corp.	1.84	1.88	1.82	1.82	265,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.7	8.7	8.6	8.6	9,884,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	50,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.04	1.04	1	1	80,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	280,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6.2	6.2	6	6	265,000
Benguet Corp. A	7.5	7.5	7.4	7.4	27,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.39	0.4	0.38	0.39	3,980,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.42	0.44	0.42	0.42	17,230,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.019	0.02	0.019	0.019	110,800,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.027	0.028	0.026	0.027	19,600,000
Omico Corp.	0.009	0.009	0.0085	0.009	165,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.18	1.22	1.18	1.22	1,435,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.44	1.46	1.42	1.44	1,377,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	45	45	44.5	44.5	395,800
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.33	0.35	0.33	0.33	340,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	2,000,000
Interport Res.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	27,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	26,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	137,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	4,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.39	0.39	0.38	0.39	70,000
Pacifica	0.015	0.015	0.014	0.015	6,400,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3	3	3	3	44,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.225	0.225	0.22	0.22	3,390,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.4	0.4	0.38	0.38	210,000

CURRENCIES

March 15, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.747775	1.000000	53.9320
Japan	Yen	0.007129	0.009533	0.5141
United Kingdom	Pound	1.431167	1.913900	103.2205
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.095874	0.128212	6.9147
Switzerland	Franc	0.645023	0.862589	46.5211
Canada	Dollar	0.619481	0.828432	44.6790
Singapore	Dollar	0.460765	0.616181	33.2319
Australia	Dollar	0.588197	0.786596	42.4227
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.983541	2.652590	143.0595
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.199407	0.266667	14.3819
Brunei	Dollar	0.459349	0.614288	33.1298
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000080	0.000107	0.0058
Thailand	Baht	0.019509	0.026089	1.4070
UAE	Dirham	0.203604	0.272279	14.6846
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.337300	72.1233
Argentina	Peso	0.256307	0.342759	18.4857
Brazil	Real	0.272354	0.364219	19.6431
Denmark	Kroner	0.134262	0.179549	9.6834
India	Rupee	0.017214	0.023020	1.2415
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.196809	0.263193	14.1945
Mexico	New Peso	0.067008	0.089610	4.8328
New Zealand	Dollar	0.551253	0.737191	39.7582
Norway	Kroner	0.122353	0.163623	8.8245
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012614	0.016869	0.9098
South Africa	Rand	0.125465	0.167785	9.0490
Korea	Won	0.000747	0.000999	0.0539
Sweden	Kroner	0.109916	0.146990	7.9275
Syria	Pound	0.014405	0.019264	1.0389
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024366	0.032584	1.7573
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000348	0.000466	0.0251

Oil prices edge toward record highs in Asia trade

SINGAPORE—World oil prices climbed past $55 and toward record highs in Asian trading Tuesday amid forecasts of strong global demand and as the market waits on Wednesday's Opec meeting, dealers said.

New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in April was up six cents early Tuesday at $55.01 a barrel from the close of $54.95 in New York on Monday.

The closing price in New York was the highest finish since the record high of $55.67 in October last year.

"Market sentiment is very bullish because of the IEA [International Energy Agency] report," said Tetsu Emori, chief commodities strategist at Mitsui Bussan Futures in Tokyo.

"A lot of speculative people are coming in to push the market, too." The most recent rises have come in the wake of the IEA, the energy forum linked with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, last week raising its forecasts for oil demand this year.

In its monthly report released on Friday, the IEA forecast a 2.2 percent rise in global demand to an average 84.3 million barrels per day.

Last July, it had forecast demand at 83.2 million bpd for 2005, hoping demand would ease after growing 3.4 percent in 2004.

Analysts said the market was also hit by a wave of buying ahead of Wednesday's meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) in Iran.

The 11-member Opec cartel, which supplies about 40 percent of the world's oil, will decide whether to maintain or increase its production ceiling of 27 million barrels a day.

"Traders are determined to get [the price] through that record," US-based analyst with Fimat USA Steve Bellino said on Monday.

"Fresh money came in, then people who had sold started buying back." Bellino said the market's "relentless momentum" was overshadowing fundamentals of supply and demand and pushing prices skyward.

"I would hope fundamentals will prevail," he said. "Short-term, the market shouldn't be here. Inventories are not desperate in the US by any means." *AFP*

China industrial growth up in Jan-Feb

BEIJING—China's industrial output in January-February showed a higher-than-expected 16.9-percent rise on a year before, much faster than recent months' data and pointing to a need for Beijing to keep cooling measures in place.

The data defied a year-long trend of steadily slowing growth in industrial production, the result of government policies to restrain the economy.

"This gives you a hint that the real activity still remains very strong, which means that more needs to be done in terms of cooling down," said Qu Hongbin, an economist with HSBC in Hong Kong.

The median estimate of five economists surveyed by Reuters was that industrial output in the first two months combined had been up 13.5 percent on a year earlier.

Economists have been looking for signs as to whether China's economy, which expanded 9.5 percent in 2004 from the previous year, is still slowing due to a raft of investment and credit curbs in place since mid-2003.

January's factory output was 8.9 percent higher than a year earlier, after making adjustments for the week-long Lunar New Year holiday, whose timing distorts data.

Before Tuesday's data, industrial output growth had shown a clear slowing trend since peaking at 23.2 percent in the 12 months through February 2004.

Seeking slower economic growth, China raised benchmark interest rates in late October last year by 0.27 of a percentage point. It was the first increase in nine years.

At the close of the annual session of parliament on Monday, Chinese officials pledged to guard against a possible rebound in fixed-asset investment growth and to stay vigilant on inflation.

Foreign investment and exports have been big factors driving factory output growth as more overseas firms have set up shop in China or sourced products from Chinese factories to exploit cheap labor and economies of scale.

Continued robust growth in factory output suggested little let-up in demand for imported raw materials, machinery and components, which has helped drive global economic growth.

"More than half of China's industrial output is geared towards external demand. Another reason [for the strength] is because investment isn't slowing as fast," said Chris Leung, an economist at DBS Bank in Hong Kong. *Reuters*

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POST AUCTION PRICES

MAKATI

ATB1 - COMM'L CONDO.
F.A. 34.79 sqm.
CITILAND DE LA ROSA
Min. Bid Price P 800,170

ATB106 - TWNHOUSE UNIT
L.A 210.79 sqm.
MAKATI PRIME CITY, SAN ANTONIO
Min. Bid Price P 5,100,000

MUNTINLUPA

ATB108 - HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 405 sqm. F.A. 476 sqm.
PLEASANT VILLAGE, Putatan
Min. Bid Price P 4,000,000

PARANAQUE

ATB105 - TWNHOUSE UNIT
L.A 80.10 sqm. F.A 76.30 sqm.
SUN VALLEY
Min. Bid Price P 1,300,000

PASAY

ATB10 - RSDL. CONDO.
F.A. 129.95
SUNSET VIEW CONDO., Roxas Blvd
Min. CASH Bid Price P 4,000,000

QUEZON CITY

ATB11 - VACANT LOT
FOR HIGH RISE DEVELOPMENT
L.A. 4,341 sqm.
In front of Residenza Subd., Camarin
Min Bid Price P 30,387,000

ATB12 - COMM'L LOT
BUYER CAN SUBDIVIDE
L.A. 3,434 sqm.
In front of Residenza Subd., Camarin
Min. Bid Price P 24,038,000

ATB13 - 2-STRY HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 300 sqm. F.A. 191 sqm.
VILLA ORION SUBD., Fairview
Min Bid Price P 4,200,000

ATB14 - 2-STRY HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 150 sqm. F.A. 270 sqm.
C. Francisco St., NORTH SUSANA [illegible]
Min Bid Price P 1,700,000

ATB15 - 2-STRY TWNHOUSE
L.A. 70 sqm. F.A. 90 sqm.
VILLA VERDE SUBD., Novaliches
Min. Bid Price P 750,000

ATB16 - 2-STRY TWNHOUSE
L.A. 70 sqm. F.A. 90 sqm.
VILLA VERDE SUBD., Novaliches
Min. Bid Price P 500,000

ATB17 - 2-STRY TWNHOUSE 4 units
L.A. 35 sqm. F.A. 56.8 per unit
WEST CLASSIC GARDEN, Fairview
Min. Bid Price P 1,100,000 / unit

ATB96A - COMM'L. CONDO
F.A 90.52 sqm.
Unit 8D- ATHERTON BLDG. T.Morato
Min. Bid Price P 2,715,600

ATB96B - RSDL. CONDO
F.A 97.51 sqm.
Unit 12E- ATHERTON BLDG., T.Morato
Min. Bid Price P 2,515,260

LITTLE BAGUIO, SAN JUAN

ATB18 - 4-STRY TWNHOUSE
L.A. 62 sqm. F.A.107.5
78 Jose Abad Santos, LITTLE BAGUIO
Min. Bid Price P 5,600,000

ANTIPOLO, RIZAL

ATB19 - RSDL LOT
L.A. 1,000 sqm.
Near Hinulugan Taktak
Min. Bid Price P 980,000

ATB24 - HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 299 sqm. F.A. 111 sqm.
#7 Sto. Rosario St., MILAGROS SUBD.
Min. Bid Price P 1,200,000

ATB25 - 9 RSDL LOTS
L.A. 1,784 sqm.
Sto. Rosario St., MILAGROS
SUBD.,
Min. Bid Price P 3,560,000

ATB26A - RSDL LOT
L.A. 1,300 sqm.
GOLDEN HILLS SUBD.,
Min. Bid Price P 1,090,900

ATB95 - HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 92.75 sqm. F.A. 33 sqm.
BRENTWOOD SUBD.
Min. Bid Price P 740,000

ATB107 - 2-STRY HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 100sqm L.A. 410 sqm.
Lot 8 Blk 1 Macopa st.,
NAVON SILANGAN SUBD.
Min. Bid Price P 3,319,000

BAGUIO

ATB57B - RSDL. LOT
L.A. 418 sqm.
MONTERAZZA VILL., [illegible]
Min. Bid Price P 700,000

BULACAN

ATB49 - IND'L LOT
L.A. 3,115 sqm
MEYCAUAYAN IND'L SUBD.
Min. Bid Price P 8,337,500

ATB50 - IND'L LOT
L.A. 2,379 sqm.
MEYCAUAYAN IND'L SUBD
Min. Bid Price P 5,947,500

ATB52 - 2-STRY RSDL. BLDG.
L.A. 250 sqm. F.A. 101.75 sqm.
Cor. Padilla St., Plaridel
Min. Bid Price P 900,000

ATB53 - POULTRY FARM
L.A. 21,532 sqm. F.A. 1,344 sqm.
Matang Tubig, Baliuag
Min. Bid Price P 5,170,000

ATB54 - POULTRY FARM
L.A. 68,210 sqm. F.A. 61.8 sqm
San Ildefonso
Min. Bid Price P 5,120,000

CAVITE

ATB55 - SCHOOL BLDG.
L.A. 341 sqm.
PRIMA HOMES, Alapan
Min. Bid Price P 2,500,000

ATB56 - 2-STRY HOUSE & LOT
L.A. 60 sqm. F.A. 52.75 sqm.
SAN RAFAEL EXEC. VILLA, Bacoor
Min. Bid Price P 900,000

ATB58 - 11 TWNHOUSE UNITS
L.A. 44 sqm. F.A. 70 sqm. per unit
GOLD RICH VILLAS, Bacoor
Min. CASH Bid Price P 4,500,000

ATB59 - RSDL. LOT
L.A. 150 sqm.
SOUTH PLAINS Exec.Vill., Dasma
Min. Bid Price P 375,000

ATB60 - RSDL LOT
L.A. 150 sqm.
METROPOLI GREEN, Gen. Trias
Min. Bid Price P 330,000
ATB61 - RESORT GOLF LOTS
L.A. 427 sqm.
EAGLERIDGE SUBD., Gen. Trias
Min. Bid Price P 1,088,850

ATB63 - RESORT GOLF LOT
L.A. 570 sqm.
MANILA SOUTHWOODS,
Carmona
Min. Bid Price P 2,280,000

CEBU

ATB09 - RSDL. CONDO.
TRINITY PLAZA, Gorordo Avenue
F.A. 33.97 Min. Bid P 951,160
F.A. 53.05 Min. Bid P 1,485,400

TAGAYTAY

ATB93 - RESORT LOT
CANYON WOODS RESORT
P6,000 / sqm
L.A. 300 Min. Bid P 1,800,000
L.A. 349 Min. Bid P 2,094,000
L.A. 405 Min. Bid P 2,430,000
L.A. 477 Min. Bid P 2,862,000
L.A. 557 Min. Bid P 3,342,000
L.A. 630 Min. Bid P 3,700,000

ATB94 - RSDL. LOT.
L.A. 647 sqm.
PACIFIC HEIGHTS SUBD.
Min. Bid Price P 3,882,000

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NEW MOON AUCTIONEERS

Philip Morris bids $5B for Indon tobacco firm

JAKARTA—Philip Morris International Inc. said on Monday it is bidding $5 billion to buy Indonesian tobacco firm PT Hanjaya Mandala Sampoerna Tbk to expand in the world's fifth-largest cigarette market.

Philip Morris, the tobacco arm of Altria Group Inc. and maker of Marlboro cigarettes, is looking for growth in emerging markets as consumption falls in the United States and other developed countries due to increased taxes, smoking bans and restrictions on advertising.

"The Third World environment typically presents a lot of opportunity for growth," said Manny Goldman, a US consumer products industry consultant.

The deal marks the biggest foreign takeover in Indonesia—a country that has struggled to win investment—and is a booster for the five-month-old government, analysts said.

Corruption and legal wrangles caused foreign investment approvals to fall 27 percent in 2004.

"When someone is willing to pay $5.2 billion in a country like Indonesia, it's a vote of confidence," said Laksono Widodo, head of research at Macquarie Securities in Jakarta.

Philip Morris set a deal to buy a 40-percent stake in Sampoerna and is tendering for the remaining shares at a 20 percent premium to their closing price on March 10.

Shares of Sampoerna—the country's third-largest tobacco company—closed up 18 percent, driving the stock market to a record high.

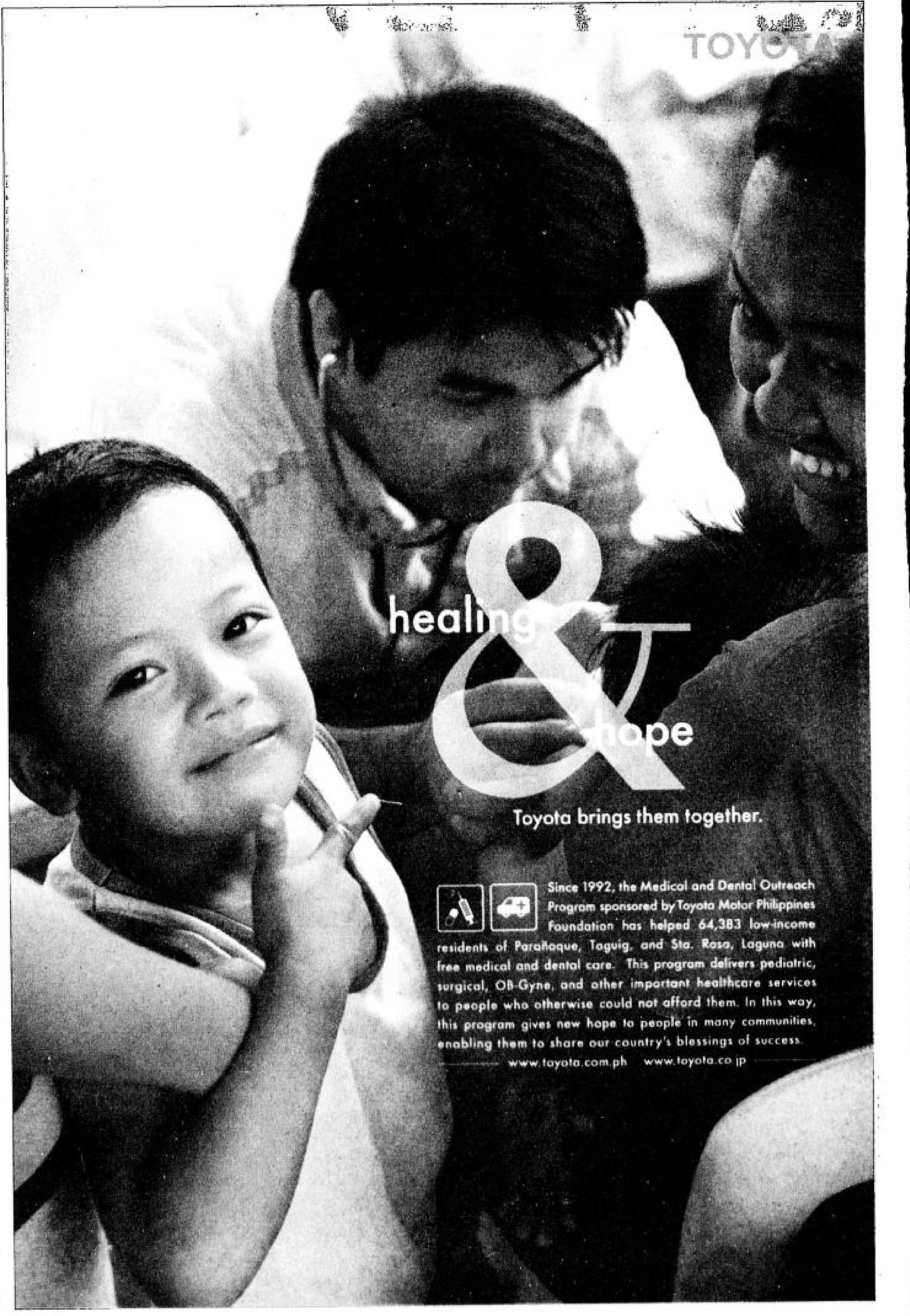
Philip Morris, which is paying cash and expects to complete the tender in 90 days, put the total value of the deal at $5.2 billion, including $160 million of debt.

It expected the transaction to contribute modestly to Altria's earnings this year.

The deal will add close to one percentage point to Philip Morris' share of the world market and will give the company an internal rate of return in the double digits, Louis Camilleri, Altria's chair and chief executive, said on a conference call. *Reuters*

TEMASEK
TOWER

SINGAPORE'S Temasek Holdings is stamping its mark as an Asian powerhouse investor after a trailblazing multi-billion dollar shopping spree in the region over the past two years, analysts said recently. AFP



Toyota brings them together.

Since 1992, the Medical and Dental Outreach Program sponsored by Toyota Motor Philippines Foundation has helped 64,383 low-income residents of Parañaque, Taguig, and Sta. Rosa, Laguna with free medical and dental care. This program delivers pediatric, surgical, OB-Gyne, and other important healthcare services to people who otherwise could not afford them. In this way, this program gives new hope to people in many communities, enabling them to share our country's blessings of success.

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ED seen in a third of male Filipinos–survey

MORE than a third of sexually active Filipino males have erectile dysfunction (ED), an international survey reported recently.

The Pfizer Global Study of Sexual Attitudes and Behavior surveyed more than 27,000 men and women, aged 40 to 80 years in 29 countries, including the Philippines. The results of the survey were discussed by Dr. Jose Albert Reyes at the recent annual convention of the Philippine Academy of Family Physicians.

"Sexual health is important even to the aging couple," said Reyes, urologist and president of the Philippine Society for the Aging Male. "Sexual interest and activity are widespread among middle aged and elderly Asian men and women and persists into old age, but there is a trend towards decline of sexual activity in the older age group," he added.

Like heart problems, hearing loss and arthritis, ED also appears to be more common in men over 40 years old. Reyes cited another survey, which showed that 32 percent of more than 4,000 male respondents have ED.

Erectile dysfunction is defined as the inability to attain and/or maintain a penile erection of sufficient rigidity for satisfactory sexual intercourse. A screening tool, the International Index for Erectile Function 5, classifies ED as mild, mild to moderate, moderate and severe based on scores from a five-item questionnaire.

Advances in technology and research have paved the way for the development of successful treatment for ED such as sildenafil citrate. Sildenafil citrate is the first oral treatment for erectile dysfunction that has been found to be effective and well tolerated in over 100 completed and ongoing clinical studies. Even with this treatment option available in the market, many men are still afraid or shy to talk about the condition with their doctors. A public service program will soon be launched to encourage more men to visit their doctors and seek help to improve their sexual health.

This health information is made possible by Pfizer, a global, research-based healthcare company that discovers, develops, manufactures and markets effective and innovative medicines for humans and animals, and many of the best-known consumer products. In 2004, Pfizer, the world's largest private biomedical research organization, invested more than $7.5 billion to find cures to help preserve, protect and promote the quality of life of people all over the world.

HOLCIM PHILIPPINES DAVAO PLANT EARNS IMS CERTIFICATION

Holcim Philippines Inc (formerly Union Cement Corp) Davao plant was certified by TUV Philippines Inc with the ISO 9001:2000, ISO 14001:1996, and OHSAS 18001:1999 Management Systems. In a formal awarding ceremony held recently at the Davao Convention Center, Carmina Espiron of TUV Philippines presented the ISO certificates to Holcim Philippines COO Paul O'Callaghan and SVP for manufacturing Alex Vonow, together with plant manager Ednel V. Pascual. They represent the compliance of Holcim Philippines to the standards of quality, environment, health and safety management systems as advanced by ISO. These management systems are part of the company's Integrated Management System addressing customers' satisfaction, environmental protection, and health and safety concerns of the employees, contractors, suppliers and visitors of the plant. The awarding ceremony was attended by the members of the management team of Holcim Philippines, local government officials, representatives from DENR EMB, MGB, DTI and other government agencies, Barangay Chairmen from the different barangays within the vicinity of the plant's operations, management staff of Davao plant, and Labor Union Officers. Shown, from left, are Alex Vonow, SVP-marketing of Holcim Philippines, Carmina Espiron of TUV Philippines, Paul O'Callaghan, COO of Holcim, and Ednel Pascual, Davao plant manager.

BCI Asia joins RP's construction event

BCI ASIA, the leading provider of construction information in Southeast Asia and Greater China, is participating in a big construction event in the Philippines.

"BCI Asia's participation in Worldbex 2005 shows its optimism about the country's construction business," said country manager Apple Patricio, citing her company's strategic role in bridging the information gap between supply and demand in the industry locally and regionally.

"BCI Asia will demonstrate how it establishes regional and national market linkages among industry players by providing their information requirements. This info-facilitation process will be illustrated by BCI Asia in its exhibit booth at Worldbex 2005 during its five-day run at the World Trade Center from March 16 to 20," Patricio added.

By bridging the information gap between supply and demand, members of the construction industry gain access to vast market opportunities, trade and investment prospects, new technologies, and hard-to-find products and services.

Such information requirements are provided exclusively by BCI Asia to its subscribers with various specific purposes, including opportunities for construction projects and supply contracts, product and service specifications, and other relevant matters for making sound corporate decisions.

"This increases transparency and competitiveness in the industry and raises construction quality while lowering costs," Patricio added.

BCI Asia's project information has thus become the leading source of new business and contract opportunities for construction companies throughout the region. BCI Asia has offices in the United States, Australia, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

The country's first and only provider of construction information, BCI Asia's Philippine office is at the LKG Tower, Unit 2304, 6801-6803 Ayala Avenue, Makati City, with telephone numbers 884-1122, fax 884-1121, and e-mail manila@bciasia.com.

BCI Asia works in partnership with architects, engineers, consultants and developers to provide comprehensive information on planned construction projects amounting to over $300 billion a year.

The company's in-house teams research all types of projects from inception through various phases of planning, tender and contract award to early construction, ranging from infrastructure, roads and bridges, airports and civil engineering works to residential buildings, office, retail, hotel and recreational facilities, both private and public.

"Whether it is an architect seeking new work, a building product manufacturer trying to have his products specified, a developer scouting out new contractors, a subcontractor looking for additional projects, BCI Asia provides all the required information that is proprietary, reliable and current," Patricio explained.

Aside from getting their specific information requirements directly from BCI Asia, subscribers also obtain valuable inputs online from BCI Asia's website and through Architecture Asia, a major quarterly publication for architects across the region.

Architecture Asia is published by PAM on behalf of Arcasia, the umbrella organization of all 16 architectural institutes in Asia and of which BCI Asia is the publishing and marketing agent.

Yap to induct new Pampi officers

AGRICULTURE Secretary Arthur Yap will lead the induction of the new officers of the Philippine Association of Meat Processors of the Philippines Inc (Pampi) at the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati City on March 18.

The presence of Yap, who will also serve as the keynote speaker in the event, highlights the growing partnership between the government and the private sector in achieving food security for the nation, according to Francisco J. Buencamino, who was reappointed as Pampi executive director.

Buencamino said the meat processing industry is a major partner of the Department of Agriculture in making available to the Filipino people high-quality and affordable food products.

"The Department of Agriculture should be commended for working diligently in consultation with Pampi and other private sector groups, which are doing their part by contributing their inputs on policies and issues. Such partnership brings Pampi closer to its ultimate goal of providing affordable, safe, wholesome, and high-quality meat products as prescribed by the government," he said.

To be inducted into the Pampi board are Felix Tiukinhoy Jr of Virginia Foods Inc, who was reelected for the sixth time as president; Jerome Ong of Foodsphere Inc, vice president; Joyce Alcoreza of Dealco Inc, secretary; Cezar Cruz Jr of Monterey Foods, treasurer; and Vivian Lim of Gen-OSI Inc, PRO.

Elected as board directors of Pampi are Rey Lapid of R. Lapid's Chicharon, Ricky Hizon of Pampanga's Best, Butch Prieto of RFM Inc, and Allan Castro of The Purefoods-Hormel Corp.

With the theme "Cooperating with the Government for Economic Recovery", the event draws attention to the contribution of the P60-billion meat processing industry to the Philippine economy, which is now feeding more than 80 million Filipino consumers.

The meat processing industry provides 60,000 direct and indirect jobs and supports businesses such as packaging, canning, advertising, printing, media, retail trade, among others.

"A healthy economy is mainly driven by robust domestic demand. The association plays an important role in exciting such demand by offering high-quality, affordable meat products that meet the international standards," he said.

Buencamino said that with the shift to new technologies, the members of the association have managed to keep prices of their products within the means of the masses, enabling the Filipino consumers to spend more for other expenditures such as mobile phones and services that have been responsible for stimulating the economy over the past five years.

Prior to the induction, the association is holding a Technical Summit on Manufacturing Technologies to be attended by international experts on March 16 and 17 to discuss the transfer of latest technologies to local meat processors as a way of making them more globally competitive.

"The association searches for developed technologies to improve the cost efficiency in packaging, processing, formulation, and even in creation of variants of processed meat that will contribute to lower prices. If this effort bears success, the association will once again have made its significant contribution in achieving stability in the prices and supply of food in the country," Buencamino said.

Buencamino noted that the switch to Indian buffalo meat from more expensive beef in other countries in the early 1990s was a major move on the part of Pampi that gave millions of poor Filipino consumers affordable access to processed meat products, which used to be sold at atrociously high prices.

"Despite the high inflation rates over the past several years, it is the meat processing industry that has been working with the government to hold off any increases in the prices of processed meat to ease the burden on the Filipino consumers. As a result, consumers can still buy hotdogs today at the same prices four years ago," he said.

Aside from hotdogs, other meat products such as corned beef, sausage, burger patties and tocino are now produced in package sizes and sold within the means of the average consumers.

AIM BOARD OF GOVERNORS JOINS GRAND ALUMNI HOMECOMING

Members of the prestigious board of governors of the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) joined the grand alumni homecoming festivities that capped the weeklong celebration of AIM's 37th anniversary. Shown are (from left) Dr. Roberto F. de Ocampo, AIM president; Victoria S. Licuanan, AIM dean; Dr. Ralph Sorenson, one of the six founders of AIM; Jose L. Cuisia Jr, AIM co-chair; Victor LL Chu, founder and chair of the First Eastern Investment Group (China); Dr. Lin See Yan, deputy chair of Bank Industri and Technologi (Malaysia); Dr. Vo-Tong Xuan, director of the Mekong Delta Farming Systems Research and Development Institute (Vietnam); Dr. Arifin Siregar, advisor of Goldman Sachs Asia Pacific and the Carlyle Group (Indonesia); Boon Yoon Chiang, chair and managing director of Jardine and Matheson Ltd (Singapore); William Anderson, former chair of NCR Corp (United States); and AIM alumnus and Triple A awardee Robert Chandran, CEO of Chemoil Corp.

WSI offers free Worldbex seminars

AS PART of the celebration of its 10th year, the Philippine World Building and Construction Exhibition (Worldbex) will again mount the Worldbex Seminars-this time for free.

Worldbex Seminars is a two-day conference that gathers experts around the world to share the latest trends and technological advancements in the building and construction industry.

This being Worldbex' decade run, Worldbex Services International (WSI), the organizers of the event, announced that the seminars would now be free for industry-related PRC ID holders. It will be held on March 17 and 18 at the Philippine Trade Training Center (PTTC), Pasay City.

Joseph Ang, WSI Founding chair, expects trade professionals nationwide particularly architects, interior designers and engineers to come in droves and take advantage of the free seminars.

Among the topics to be discussed are "The Value of Design in Providing An Edge for Property Development," by Dr. Tan Loke Mun of Malaysia; "Planning For An Alternative Public Transport," by Albin Koenigshofer of Austria; "Sky Houses: Flying Green," by architect Khoo Peng Beng of Singapore.

Three Australians have also confirmed participation: engineer Ian Draper will speak on "Building Over Soft Ground;" Sally Clark on "Capable Waste Water Treatment Technology," and Reginald Wilson on "Lighting for Safety & Security-A Dark Sky Approach."

Worldbex seminars aim to empower professionals with adequate knowledge on new industry trends, innovation and developments that can benefit their professions and respective companies.

More PEP on B18, B19 and B20

ProductFILES

Volvo S60 T5 Cagi's best

WITH its dynamic style, exhilarating driving character and class-leading safety technology, the Volvo S60 T5 has been named the Best Luxury Sedan for 2004 by the members of the Car Awards Group Inc (Cagi) in the recent Car of the Year Awards.

The S60 T5 topped a tough field of competitors, besting the BMW 530D, Jaguar S-Type and Mercedes Benz E-Class. With its powerful 250 bhp 5-cylinder engine, it gave power and thrilling performance. Coupled with sleek design and luxurious comfort, the S60 T5 also edged its competitors in terms of pricing. The 2.3L powerhouse is priced at a very competitive P2.745 million, offering interested clients more value for their money. In a nutshell, the S60 T5 is the most intelligent choice for sports sedan enthusiasts.

This is Cagi's first foray in giving out awards to car manufacturers in the Philippines. More than 40 members of the media tested and judged the cars on style, design, handling, comfort and a host of other criteria. More than 50 cars underwent rigid assessment during the test fests held in October and November of 2004. The votes were tabulated by an independent organization, Sycip, Gorres and Velayo.

In Manila, Viking Cars Inc is the official distributor of Volvo cars. The Volvo Makati office, showroom and after sales service center are at 2272 Chino Roces Avenue, Makati City while Volvo Ortigas Center is at 88 ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. The 2005 Volvo automobile line includes the all-new S40 compact sedan and V50 sportswagon, the sporty S60, the flagship S80 luxury sedan, the rugged Cross Country and the all-new XC90 AWD. For details and inquiries, call 893-6621 to 22 (Makati showroom) or 637-0414 to 15 (Ortigas showroom).

Asian share markets close mixed; Nikkei up

SINGAPORE—Asian share markets were mixed on Tuesday, with key exporters such as Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd. sagging, but Japan's market was lifted by steel makers and hopes for dividend hikes from some tech firms.

Oil prices hovered near $55 a barrel—less than a dollar below a record high—a day before Opec meets to decide whether to change official output limits.

Gold paused after a pullback from 2005 highs late last week while the dollar held onto earlier gains against most currencies as dealers awaited key US capital flow and current account data.

MSCI's index of non-Japan shares fell 0.52 percent, paced by a 1.38-percent decline in its technology component.

Japan's Nikkei stock index ended the morning session up 0.19 percent at 11,872.74.

Shares of Hitachi Ltd. and Toshiba Corp. jumped 1.8 percent and 0.43 percent, respectively, on media reports they would boost dividends due to higher net profit.

"In addition to expected recovery in their earnings, it seems tech companies' managements have started to care more about shareholders and their rights ... this is really good news and I think companies in other sectors will start to follow suit," said Yasuo Yabe, director of sales at Meiwa Securities.

US light crude seesawed either side of the $55 a barrel mark, trading up 3 cents in Asian trade to $54.98 by 0232 GMT.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) meets on Wednesday, with top producer Saudi Arabia calling for a modest increase in cartel supplies that could help cool oil.

Iran, which had indicated it wanted to keep output unchanged, said on Monday it would go along with any consensus that emerges on output policy.

In Asian share markets, Taiwan's stock index fell 1.17 percent and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index dropped 0.46 percent, while Singapore's index edged 0.18 percent higher.

Australian blue-chips were flat in morning trade, with the benchmark S&P/ASX 200 index down 0.09 percent. BHP Billiton fell 1.26 percent on a drop in copper prices.

South Korea's benchmark KOSPI stock index took a stronger hit, down 1.6 percent on concerns that persistently high oil prices will cut into corporate profits and choke off a nascent recovery in consumer demand.

Major exporters Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd. and LG Electronics Inc. fell 1.37 and 1.98 percent, respectively, as the effect of near-record high oil prices overshadowed a strengthening of the US dollar versus the Korean won, analysts said.

Korea's new finance minister, Han Duck-soo, called for interest rates to be kept low to stimulate the economy amid signs consumer spending is emerging from a two-year slump.

In Japan, steel maker Nippon Steel Corp. rose 0.71 percent on expectations that steelmakers will be able to pass on higher material costs to their customers.

The Nihon Keizai newspaper said top steel makers had secured a 20-percent rise in steel plate and sheet prices in talks with shipbuilders and electronics firms.

As of 0227 GMT, the euro traded at $1.3360, compared with $1.3369 in late New York. It fell 0.6 percent on Monday. The dollar bought 104.67 yen, compared with 104.88 in late US trade.

Dealers focused on upcoming economic data, expecting foreign central bankers to continue to finance the huge US current account deficit.

The US Treasury is due to release international capital flows data for January at 1400 GMT. US current account data is expected on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the yield on Japan's 10-year benchmark government cash bond (JGB) fell half a basis point to 1.495 percent.

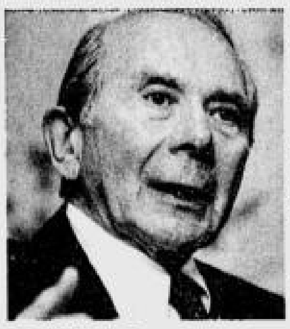
Spot gold traded at $440.50 an ounce in Asia, down slightly from $440.75 in late New York and below levels of more than $446 late last week.

US stocks rose, paced by a late rally led by biotech stocks after Genentech Inc.'s key cancer drug was reported to have helped extend the lives of lung cancer patients. Its shares surged 25 percent, adding more than $11 billion in market capitalization in the last hour of trading.

The Dow Jones industrial average finished up 0.28 percent at 10,804.51 while the Nasdaq Composite Index closed 0.46 percent higher at 2,051.04. *Reuters*

NEW NISSAN cars await to be loaded onto a cargo ship at a logistics parking lot in Yokohama port, west of Tokyo, Monday. Japan's economy squeezed out 0.1 percent growth during the October-December quarter, the government said, in an upward revision of earlier data that had shown a contraction. The revised numbers show that the economy grew at an annualized rate of 0.5 percent during the quarter ending Dec. 31, 2004, and recorded growth after two straight previous quarters of contraction. AP

Greenberg out as AIG chief



GREENBERG

NEW YORK—Maurice "Hank" Greenberg, chief executive of insurance giant American International Group, has been removed from his post as part of a broad management reshuffle, the company announced late Monday.

A statement issued by the conglomerate said its board of directors had implemented what it called a "management succession plan" and elected Martin Sullivan, 50, to replace 79-year-old Greenberg as president and chief executive officer.

Greenberg, who made no public statement, will continue to work at the company as its non-executive chairman, according to the announcement. But the scope of his responsibilities was not immediately clear.

Board chairman Frank Zarb said the company appreciated "the enormous contributions that Hank Greenberg has made to AIG's growth and success."

"However, the board has concluded it is now in the best interest of AIG's shareholders, customers and employees to turn to a new generation of leadership, and we are pleased that Hank Greenberg will assist in the transition," Zarb pointed out.

As part of the shake-up, former vice chair Donald Kanak, 52, was elected executive vice chair and chief operating officer in charge of operations in Asia.

Meanwhile, Steven Bensinger, 50, became executive vice president and chief financial officer, succeeding Howard Smith, 60, who is leaving the company.

As the world's largest insurance firm, AIG has more than 92,000 employees in more than 130 countries and territories and is believed to be worth more than $166 billion under current market prices.

It claims to have the most extensive worldwide property-casualty and life insurance networks.

But AIG came under a cloud of suspicion amid reports that the Securities and Exchange Commission and the New York attorney general were looking into some of its transactions that may have artificially burnished the company's financial picture.

In light of these suspicions, the firm said it would delay the filing of its 2004 annual report, which was due out March 16.

Officials said the delay was the result of both the management changes and the company's ongoing internal review of some of its transactions and accounting procedures. *AFP*

Tough tasks face Disney's Iger

IGER REUTERS

NEW YORK—Robert Iger, the company insider tapped as the next chief executive of the Walt Disney Co., faces a daunting task in heading up a broad media entertainment firm in a rapidly changing landscape.

The media entertainment behemoth Sunday announced it was picking an internal executive to replace the long-serving Eisner who has reigned as the magic kingdom's CEO since 1984.

Iger, 54, who has been president and chief operating officer (COO), was unanimously chosen to lead the company. He will officially take on his new role on Sept. 30.

Analysts who cover the entertainment giant were generally positive.

Laura Martin of Soleil/Media Metrics said the news was good for the company.

"After 30 years as (the number two executive) under several demanding and performance-oriented bosses, Iger brings to Disney a vision different from Eisner's but steeped in Disney culture," she said in a note to clients.

"Iger will be able to hit the ground running. He knows the Disney system—and knows who he needs in order to get things done." Goldman Sachs called Iger's appointment "a net positive reinforcing our already bullish view" and reiterated Goldman's "outperform" rating on the news.

But critics of Eisner said the move to tap his hand-picked successor falls short of what is needed to turn around the fortunes of the company.

Roy Disney, nephew of company founder Walt Disney who led a shareholder drive to oust Eisner last year, expressed disappointment.

"We find it incomprehensible that the board of directors of Disney failed to find a single external candidate interested in the job and thus handed Bob Iger the job by default," Roy Disney said in a joint statement with fellow shareholder Stanley Gold.

The board stripped Eisner of his chairman title last March, under intense shareholder pressure, leaving that post to former US Sen. George Mitchell.

Iger, known as "Bob" at Disney, will take the helm of one of the world's best-known companies which spans Hollywood studios, television and cable networks, theme parks, cruise ships and toys.

The new CEO will also preside over a corporate empire that employs thousands of workers and is currently constructing an 11th theme park in Hong Kong.

Iger started his career in entertainment some 30 years ago as a studio supervisor in New York, before moving to ABC Sports where he toiled for 12 years.

After rising through the ranks at ABC Sport, he eventually became a senior manager of the ABC television network in 1988, before being anointed ABC president and COO in 1994. AFP

Lufthansa, Swiss tie-up seen boosting industry consolidation

FRANKFURT—Plans by German airline Lufthansa to buy its ailing partner Swiss would speed up consolidation in the European airline sector as older carriers joined forces to battle low-cost upstarts, analysts here said on Monday.

German investors appeared to like the idea of a tie-up, with Lufthansa shares soaring 1.52 percent to close at 11.34 euros on the Frankfurt stock exchange.

Swiss shares leapt 18 percent in initial trades, but later came crashing down and closed with a loss of 0.5 percent at 10.35 Swiss francs.

International ratings agency Moody's injected a note of caution as well, warning that a tie-up might lead to a downgrade for Lufthansa.

Following a great deal of merger speculation, Lufthansa and Swiss International Air Lines announced late Sunday that they were in "constructive" takeover talks.

The idea was to integrate Swiss—the successor company to former flag carrier Swissair which went bust in 2001—into the wider Lufthansa group, the German airline said in a statement.

Pending the necessary regulatory approval, Lufthansa would initially submit a public offer to buy Swiss shares currently traded on the stock exchange.

Lufthansa did not name a price, but said it would be "based on the average share price of the recent weeks."

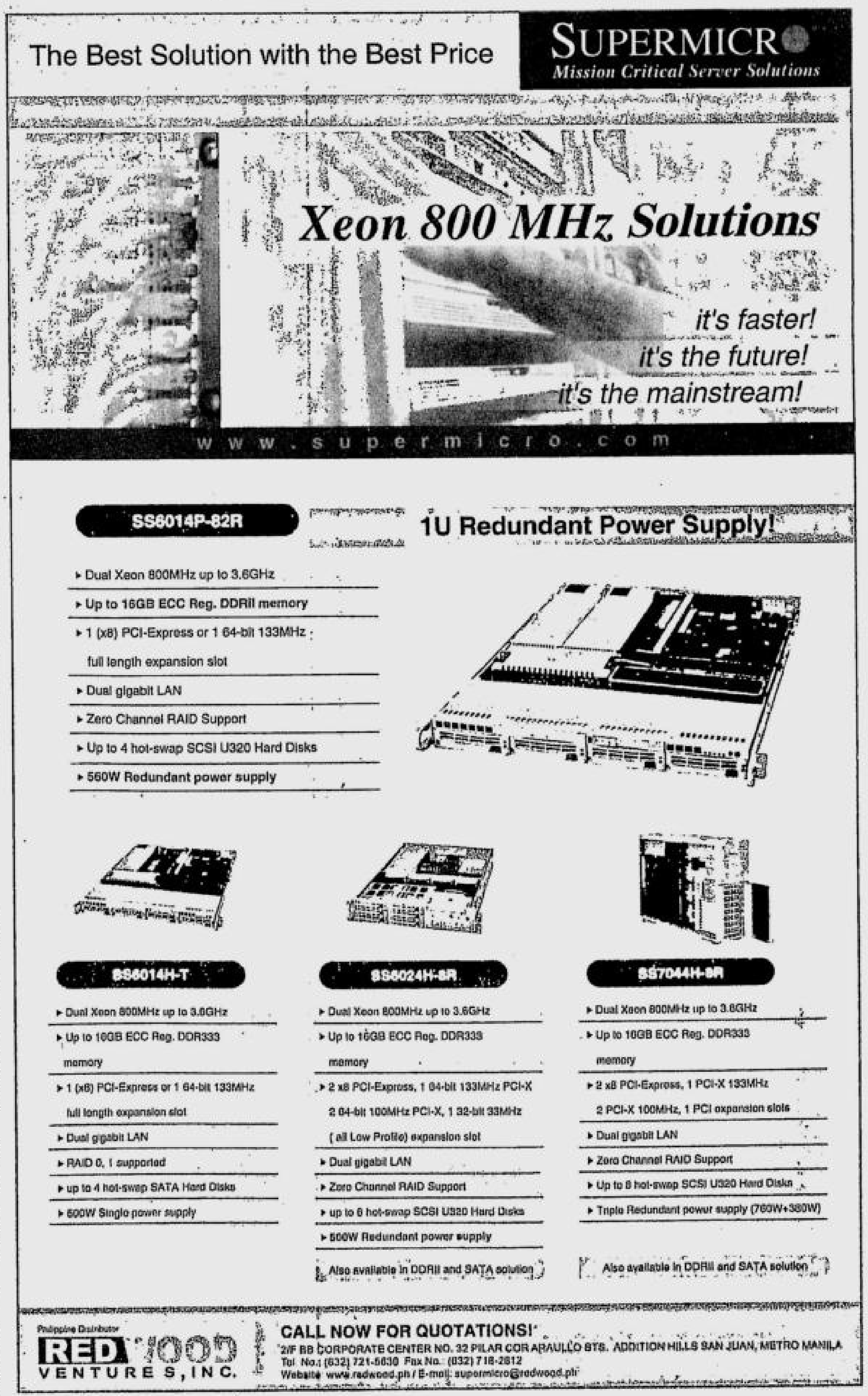
With around 14 percent of Swiss's share capital or 7.35 million shares currently in free float, that part of the transaction could therefore cost Lufthansa 60-70 million Swiss francs (40-50 million euros, $54-67 million).

It was not clear what Lufthansa would offer Swiss' other shareholders, who include the Swiss state and Swiss banks UBS and Credit Suisse.

Experts suggested they might be prepared to offer their shares for a symbolic price if Lufthansa promised to drop demands that they cover some of the restructuring costs.

Lufthansa and Swiss have long been seen as potential bedfellows.

In the past, Lufthansa has tended to steer clear of big acquisitions, opting instead for code-sharing agreements under the umbrella of its Star Alliance grouping. *AFP*



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- Zero Channel RAID Support
- up to 6 hot-swap SCSI U320 Hard Disks
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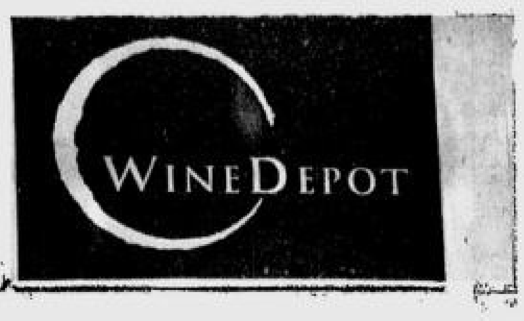
Three women build a career out of their love for wine



By Candy G. Villanueva
Contributor

ALL ABOUT WORK

GRACE Miranda spends a great deal of her nights and even her days sampling the latest Cabernet Sauvignon from Australia. Hazel Huelves, on the other hand, occupies her time working the crowd in wine-tasting dinners. The third member of the group, Joanna Gallent, spends a week in the south of Australia in a grape farm soaking up the culture. Although these women are enjoying the good life, they're also working. They are wine specialists, or wine lovers as they would rather be called. These three women make *vino* their business.

According to Joanna Gallent, there is no known Filipino sommelier in the country but there are several wine connoisseurs or wine lovers who make wine their business. Three of them are found in the heart of Makati's business district in a 500-sq-meter spacious floor area that houses hundreds of intoxicating flavors from well-known wineries all over the world.

Wine superstore

All three women are as diverse and as unique as their backgrounds but they all came together for the love of wine. Last year, Huelves, Miranda and Gallent opened a wine superstore that claims to be different from your usual liquor or wine shops. For one, Wine Depot not only sells an impressive variety of brands, the superstore also offers education and an unforgettable experience for the senses. Although a walk through the aisles of colorful bottles is already an experience in itself, Wine Depot offers wine-tasting events, educational tours and activities that will not only stimulate the taste buds but awaken the other senses as well.

Expatriates, company decision-makers, enthusiasts and even occasional drinkers visit the Wine Depot to benefit from the store's educational tours. That's because Wine Depot is the only wine store in Metro Manila that has a brief history of every product on display with the specific characteristics of each. It also includes pairing suggestions, shelf life and points from publications on wines and spirits.

Wine Depot also recently received the National Shoppers Choice Award by Essences Magazine. "We are the fastest-growing wine intermediary in the country and a key player in the wine wholesale business," reports Miranda.

Different backgrounds

Joanna Gallent, a former flight attendant, was originally a manager of a cigars outlet in Makati Shangri-la. And because cigars and wines are closely associated, Gallent decided to diversify into the wine business. She handles details related to retail trade such as keeping inventory, maintenance and the overseeing of the store's overall operations. "We started as a distributor, not having a store. We walked out there and sold our wines to all restaurants and hotels, and managing these accounts is a career in itself," shares Gallent.

While Gallent takes care of the business side, Grace Miranda handles the wholesale operations under a sister company named Winedirect. A registered nurse by profession, Miranda discovered she not only had a taste for fermented grape beverages but for the wine business as well. After four years in the health-care industry, Miranda learned the business of wines as a manager of a wine lounge. "I learned a lot from my previous job experiences that my present position comes very naturally to me. Hotels, restaurants, bars, supermarkets, wine hops and dealers make up my roster of clients."

Although Miranda is on the field most of the days, she always finds the time to savor a glass of Australian Shiraz. "I'm very much of a wine drinker now, cultivating my palate through my work. My favorite grape variety is the Shiraz because it is something strong—peppery and spicy—and something complex in character, much like my personality.

The last member of the triumvirate used to be a professional model. After several years of experience in the family's bar and restaurant business, she now handles the Wine Depot's Wine Club and the company's corporate clients. She used to train the frontline staff on basic wine knowledge as well as tips on how to serve and store wine. "Now I organize events, manage the growing membership network and supply companies with wine requirements for their parties and/or giveaways."

"Drinking wine is a lifestyle and is a glamorous job for me. I get to see the same class of people I dealt with in my modeling days and I get to dress up in the venues where I set up my events. I hold wine-tasting events for members monthly," Huelves adds.

Science of the senses

Sadly, there is not much of a career for sommeliers in the country, but enthusiasts and wine lovers can still hope to carry out their passion for Merlots and Champagne as wine directors, cellar masters, restaurant managers, food and beverage directors, lounge managers, *maitre d's* and even chefs.

Although acquiring a taste for Chardonnays and Merlots is a step towards a career in wines, good background and training could also be useful. "Joanna, Grace and I went to Adelaide in the south of Australia where we spent more than a week in a grape farm for us to see the process and do the proverbial 'walk in the clouds,'" says Huelves. Annually, Wine Depot also sends members of its personnel to an Australian farm and winery or some other wine-producing country for a hands-on experience on the process of wine-making as part of its continuing education program.

WINE specialists (from left): Hazel Huelves, Joanna Gallent and Grace Miranda.

Like the trio, wine specialists could also benefit from developing a basic understanding of food and wine marriage, wine terminology, label information and rudimentary service techniques. Because sensory evaluation is an important part of the job, wine specialists would do well to master the different components of appearance, aroma and flavor. A basic understanding of the different grapes used in wine-making is also a must. Wine-tasting seminars are conducted by a few groups in the country; one of them is Wine Depot. Huelves also suggests publications like the Wine Spectator and the Wine Enthusiasts and the site www.winedirect.com.ph for enthusiasts and first-time drinkers alike.

Those who have higher aspirations may earn a master sommelier diploma at the Sommelier Society of America, Court of Master Sommeliers in London or the Italian Association of Sommeliers. One may have all the necessary credentials and training but in the end, it's simply all about enjoying and relishing every glorious sip of this rich beverage known as wine.

How do you avoid being superman or superwoman at work?

WORKING WOUNDED
Bob Rosner

DEAR WW: Everyone has always called me a type-A personality. Recently I realized that it wasn't a compliment, most people just thought I was a jerk. I'd like to change, but I don't even know where to start.

Former Superhero

If I had to pick a favorite type of criminal from all the ones I've written about, it would be people who steal slow-moving vehicles and then try to outrun police going 20 miles an hour or less. For example, a 29-year-old man recently stole a tractor that was towing an 18-foot-wide plow. He was chased (if 20 mph can be called "chasing") by police from Wheaton, MN all the way to South Dakota until he finally crashed.

What didn't work for this guy, taking a slower path, is just what the doctor ordered for you. You might be surprised at the new perspective and appreciation you'll gain by approaching your career differently. Below I've listed some strategies for slowing down. For more, check out "Superman Complex" by Max Carey (Longstreet, 1999).

Do you only talk with people who can help you? A friend once said that the best time to strike up a conversation with someone is precisely when you don't need something from him or her. But it's more than that. You'll be amazed at how many people have interesting stories and insight. Take the time to get to know people and you just might learn something.

Can you play a game just for the fun of it? Our culture gives accolades to people who always try to win at everything that they do. But there is another word for people who stomp their ten-year-olds in Scrabble or basketball—jerks. There are times to keep score and there are times when you shouldn't. Try playing a game just for the fun of playing and you might realize that always keeping score can ruin a perfectly good game.

Can you stop multitask-

HOW/B16

ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY MISTADES

'Our dentists are at par with the world's best!'

By Tita Datu Puangco

Advice FOR THE ANXIOUS PERSON AT WORK

FIRST of all we would like to thank you for lending your expertise to our small business. When we faxed our note to you last January asking for a one-on-one consultation, we never expected that we would get a positive response knowing your busy schedules. However, relying on our UST connection, we made a giant leap of faith so to speak. Our meetings have been very productive. But the most blessed thing that happened to us was that we became less anxious of our company's growth and development. We are now more confident to face the challenges that lie ahead.

As you have learned from our planning session, the dental laboratory industry is faced with tremendous challenges. Aside from the local market, we rely heavily on the dental services we provide to our *balikbayans* and overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). Our dentists and dental technicians are at par with the world's best and we offer fees at very reasonable rates. Our *balikbayans* and OFWs know this and so they come here often for their dental services.

For the dental laboratory industry, the challenge is to tap the overseas market and help generate employment. Please give us additional advice on how to market our products and services. With your help and guidance, we hope to be a part of these exciting developments. Once again thank you, and more power to you and your company. May God's grace and peace be with you always.

Less Anxious Entrepreneurs

Congratulations for recognizing and tapping the opportunity provided by medical and dental tourism. You have found a niche in dental laboratory products. You have recognized that growth for your company will mean expanding your overseas market. You have identified your key customers. First are Filipinos working overseas who take the opportunity to get dental treatment while visiting or vacationing in our country. Second are dentists overseas who need quality and affordable dentures for their patients. The manner of marketing to these two sectors may vary.

Interactive marketing

Let us begin with *balikbayans* and OFWs. How do you reach them in a cost effective manner? You can use more interactive marketing techniques that allow for two-way communication.

One is through networking. Get a list of recruitment agencies responsible for placing Filipinos overseas. Make sure they are accredited by the Department of Labor and Employment. You can seek out the owners and managers of these companies and make arrangements either for referrals or sending information to OFWs about your services and products. What would be ideal is for you to put together a database with e-mail addresses, making your promotional effort more cost effective.

Two, invest in an attractive web site where interested customers can simply log in and get all the information they need about your company. The web site must have the capability to allow for potential companies to post queries, set appointments etc. You may also want down the line to create an incentive system for your current clients who refer other OFWs who avail of your service.

Three, you can also apply for membership with associations and organizations that target OFWs. As I move around different industries, I have noted that a number of companies engaged in real estate, banks, insurance and remittance companies are tapping into OFW wealth. I have also noted events being sponsored by different sectors that attract OFWs as entrepreneurs.

Overseas marketing

Now, on selling your dental lab products to dentists abroad. You have to identify the countries where you want to sell. Visit the local embassies of said countries and ask for specific information on dentist associations in their countries. Write the associations and try to get as much information on your potential customers. You can do this through e-mail. You can find out more about the motivations, procedures and buying habits of dentists. You can inquire on local prices of products and services and best ways of communicating to dentists. This may include inquiring how you can get to advertise your services in their newsletters or get to be invited to visit and speak in their monthly meetings.

Then, you can make a list of your relatives, friends and connections abroad. Prepare a letter that they can give to their dentists letting them know of the services you offer. When you go abroad, you can have flyers or a Powerpoint presentation ready to explain your business.

Finally, when you generate substantial business remember that the increased customer demands will exert pressure on your organization, specifically on your production people and process.

All the best to you! May your dream of creating more jobs for the country through your enterprise become a reality.

(Ms Puangco is CEO and chair of Ancilla Enterprise Development Consulting. Send feedback through e-mail to advice@ancillaedc.com.ph *or fax to* 892-2902.)

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

Family planning tops non-wage benefits in CBAs

ASIDE from wage increases, workers pursued non-wage benefits in Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) with family planning topping the list, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) said as it underscored the CBA as an effective tool in pursuing such benefits to the workers.

All CBAs filed with the DOLE in 2003 showed the significance of collective bargaining in providing for wage increases and other benefits to the workers.

In a study submitted to Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia A. Sto. Tomas, the Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics (BLES) revealed that a total of 324 CBAs were registered nationwide during the year, of which 188 (58 percent) were negotiated by affiliated unions while the remaining 136 (42 percent) belonged to the independent unions.

One of the economic provisions strongly pursued by workers in their negotiations was the granting of wage increases spread over a period of three to five years. Two hundred twenty eight or 70.4 percent of the total CBAs registered have provisions on wage increases expressed either in daily or monthly rate per covered employee, the study said.

Apart from provisions of wage adjustments, health program for workers was also included in the CBAs like the family planning topping the list (227 or 68.8 percent), followed by medical services (67.6 percent) and hospitalization plan (63.3 percent).

The study also showed that other form of assistance such as burial or bereavement aid was stipulated in more than 60 percent of the total CBAs filed.

Sociopolitical provisions were also included in the CBAs with union security clause contained in 88.9 percent of them; job security clause, 74.1 percent; union leave for union officers and members, 61.7 percent; labor productivity measures, 44.1 percent; and labor education, 42.3 percent.

Among all sectors, the manufacturing sector has the highest CBA registration with 189 or 58.3 percent of the total.

DOLE reports only two strikes recorded in first two months of 2005

EXCEPT for the two work stoppages in Central Luzon, all regions in the country were strike and lockout-free during the first two months of this year, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) reported today.

In a report to Labor and Employment Secretary Patricia A. Sto. Tomas, the National Conciliation and Mediation Board (NCMB) said only labor disputes at Sub-Miniature Lamps Industries Corp. and Solid Development Corp, both in Central Luzon materialized into actual strikes during the fourth week of February involving 300 and 420 workers, respectively.

The strikes were still the subject of conciliation, according to Undersecretary for labor relations Manuel G. Imson. He said the two strikes recorded was 33 percent lower than the three cases declared during the same period last year. However, workers affected increased from 307 a year ago to 720 workers this year, he added. In terms of mandays lost, he said that a total of 1,440 mandays were made idle this year compared to 4, 144 mandays recorded during the same period last year.

While strikes were ongoing in Central Luzon, the rest of the regions have so far remained strike and lockout free, Imson said.

The labor undersecretary also reported that of the 70 notices received this year, 53 involve unfair labor practice (ULP), 10 were due to deadlock in bargaining negotiations and seven cases have a combination of ULP and bargaining deadlock issues.

Last year, there were 67 notices of strike or lockout filed having issues of ULP and 15 involving deadlock in bargaining

DOLE/B16

La Salle alumni host career forum

ON MARCH 30th, the Liberal Arts Chapter of the De La Salle Alumni Association will host "Fast Track Your Career With Lasallians Looking Out For One Another." With the Philippine economic recovery underway, it is indeed timely for a career forum.

This forum is unique in that, it addresses concerns of finding a better job and getting a promotion as well as how to have a successful second career. There are two separate sessions in one day. Leading the lineup of forum speakers in the first session from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. is the president of the De La Salle University, Br. Armin Luistro. Equitable PCI Bank CEO Rene Buenaventura will follow.

The forum is intended for everyone, regardless of where one is in the career ladder, including entrepreneurs. The forum is composed of a good mix of distinguished Lasallians from different functions and industries speaking on different aspects of careers.

Among the other afternoon session speakers are: Mon Isberto, Smart's head of public affairs, Juan Miguel del Rosario, HR VP of United Pulp and Paper and the "winningest" coach of the UAAP, De La Salle's basketball coach, Franz Pumaren.

The evening session from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. will be led by the EVP of DLSU, Dr. Carmelita Quebengco. Other speakers in this session are: Franco del Rosario, managing consultant of Six Sigma Consulting, Ayala Aon CEO James Matti, SGV partner Gerry Sanvictores and Smart's Head of Personal Communications and Mobile Services and Agora Marketing Awardee Boy Martirez.

The forum will take place at the Francisco Santiago Hall, at the mezzanine floor of the Equitable PCI Bank Tower 1 at H. V. de la Costa St. corner Makati Avenue. The forum will revolve on such topics such as "How Not to Let a Difficult Boss Get in the Way of Your Career Advancement," "How Emotional Intelligence Can Further Your Career," "To Be a CEO, Think Like a CEO," "Blunders in Career Change," "How to Motivate Your Superiors to Promote You," "Myths About How to Fast Track Career," "Fast Track my Career or Put up my Own Business?" and "Do's and Don'ts to Fast Track a Career."

For more information, contact the La Salle alumni office at telephone numbers 523-6158, 526-5612, fax no. 809-8074 and e-mail francodelrosario@hotmail.com. Lasallians have priority registrations up to March 16th after which confirmations will be given to non-Lasallians. La Salle alumni desiring to speak in future career forums are likewise requested to fax or e-mail their biodata.

Eight antidotes ...

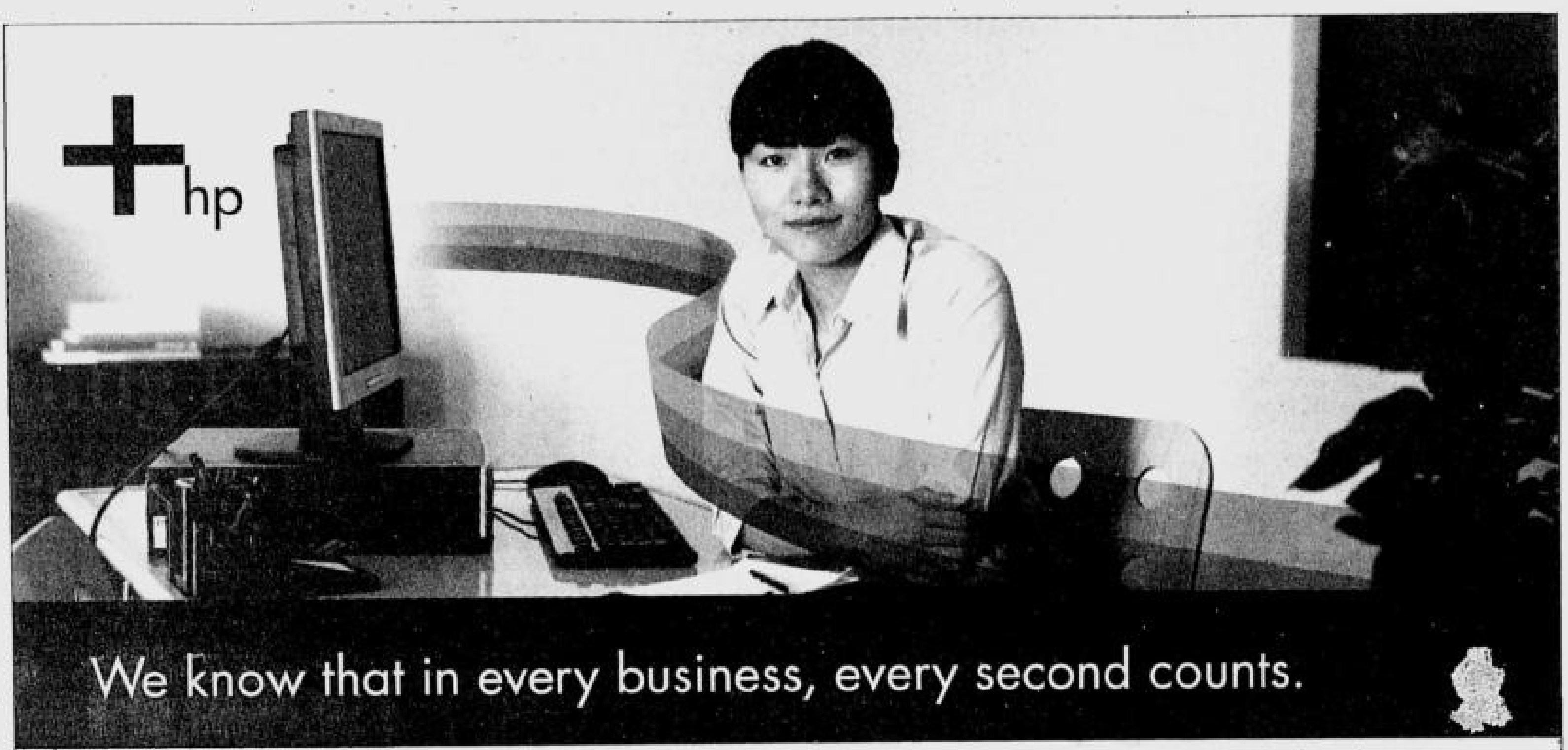
From page B17

that you must remember that your enemy is a human being like yourself. What you wouldn't want to be done to you, please don't do to her or him. In the future, there may be opportunities to reconcile and such will be a lot easier if you fought honorably and was a respectful and respectable enemy.

6. **Have a feedback mechanism.** Actually, this should be the number one antidote. This is a tested formula engaged in by a 450-year-old biggest organization of priests, the Jesuits, as presented in the book "Heroic Leadership" by Chris Lowney. In this feedback mechanism, every member of the organization is rated by subordinate, peer, and supervisor with the goal of identifying his weaknesses and helping him overcome them.

7. **Embrace the four pillars of Jesuit leadership** as listed in Lowney's book (Remember, each one of us is a leader): self-awareness, ingenuity, love and heroism.

8. **Surrender your time to the Highest Leader.** Regard the workplace as The Vineyard (metaphor for God's workplace where the harvests are abundant but the laborers are few). Let us choose to surrender our time to Him. If we don't give Him our time, He can't use our bodies and our abilities. Let us turn over our entire day to him every morning when we wake up, so He can direct us to be productive and safe in our workplace. How we use God's gift of time has a profound effect on our own lives and the lives of others. (*Send feedback to* crvillamin@yahoo.com.)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Work-at-home moms still have boundaries to respect

WORKING MOM

An Mercado Alcantara

HERE'S A RUDE awakening. Just because you've decided to work from home and spend more time with your kids, doesn't mean your kids will be happy about it. Your intentions may all be in the right place, but home is about being where you are most comfortable and, no matter what your guilty conscience says, sometimes your kids just don't find it comfortable to have you at home.

Diego, my three-year-old, and I have been struggling with this realization for over two months now. Since hammering out a work-at-home program, which allows me to spend two days of the work week telecommuting from my home, my toddler and I have not been the happiest of campers. My dreams of being all snuggly and giggly with my son, watching his milestones unfold in real time, and basking in the guilt-free comfort of home all disappeared when he began ramming into my desk chair to grab my attention, inventing hippopotamus emergencies so that I would rush into his bedroom to play with him, and raising a fist at me when I wouldn't turn to look at him as soon as he called me.

Different mom

He was not used to this new version of mom—at home yet preoccupied, present yet untouchable. Neither did he like this new concept of "quiet zones" and "don't disturb areas." He used to have full reign over the house through most of the day. He could run about, scream and laugh aloud where and when ever he pleased. Now suddenly, there are a lot of hushing, shooing, and door closing going on. I used to come home from work at a predictable time, eat at a predictable time, and then give my full attention to him at a predictable space. Now, schedules had become unpredictable and mom's attention has become so visibly divided.

I didn't quite see how much of an intrusion I was to his little world until I overheard him talking to his grandmother on the phone. Eager to stay connected with her grandson, my mother-in-law calls him everyday at different times of the day. I was shocked when one day I heard him tell her off. "I'm busy, Lala," he said and then put the phone down. His tone, his choice of words, even his body language had me written all over it. He mirrored back what he had been experiencing from me. He felt shut off. I realized how rude I had been to him.

It was uncouth of me to assume I could simply encroach on his space, usurp his playtime, and then expect him to be happy and grateful to me. Diego deserved better than that. If I wanted him to respect my space and my time, I had to offer him the same respect for his space and his time.

Respect for space

Now, Diego and I have this little game going. We've drawn an imaginary line across our home—one zone is for Momsie, the other for Diego. At certain times of the day, I have to ask permission to go across to his area and he has to get permission to come across to my area. When I'm working, my space is mine; when he is having his quiet play time, his space is his. I allow him to experience what it feels like to have someone respect his area, so that he could accord me the same respect.

Time-out

We have another game, this one with a timer. Every once in a while I know Diego needs to get my attention—it could be because he is proud of something he made, it could be because he just wants to check if I'm still home, or it could be because he simply wants a hug. I have promised to give him the attention he needs when he needs it BUT I have also asked him to understand that I can't stay very long. So we now have a timer. Every time he runs to me and asks me to be with him, I tell him I can be with him for five minutes. Then we press the timer. When it goes off, it means mom must go back to her work.

Diego loves the arrangement. Very often, as we are playing, he will check with me: "Do you have the timer? Did it ring?" I think he is just as surprised as I am at how long five minutes can stretch if you're giving yourself fully to the moment. The bigger surprise is because he feels I was truly present to him in those few minutes, he doesn't feel the need to run back to me very often. He has enough fuel to go on longer stretches of time without a "mommy hug break."

If work-life balance is about defining boundaries and finding the fullness of possibilities within the areas of time and space we have defined, then Diego has taught me well.

(An Mercado-Alcantara is founding editor of Working Mom magazine published by ABS-CBN Publishing, Inc. For more work-life balance tips, get this month's issue with Rissa Samson on the cover. Comments are welcome at an_alcantara@abs.pinoycentral.com.*)*

DOLE reports…

From page B15

negotiations while two cases have a combination of both issues, Imson said.

On case disposition, Imson said a 48 percent disposition rate was attained this year as against 50 percent last year, adding that settlement rate this year was recorded at 44 percent compared to 43 percent last year.

Imson said that as a result of the settlement of 69 notices of strikes, some 722 workers benefited from the P7 million collective bargaining packages while P22 million were awarded to 334 workers from the separation package facilitated during the first two months of the year. He said it took an average of 42 days to settle a strike/lockout notice this year, or a day faster than the 43 days recorded last year.

How do you avoid being superman or superwoman …

From page B14

ing? There are times when someone deserves your undivided attention; an employee who asks for your advice, your kid who is having a really bad day, etc. Put down whatever you are working on and focus just on them. Sure you won't be as efficient as possible for those few minutes, but I guarantee that the other person will appreciate your undivided attention.

Do you apologize? Apologizing is a good thing. Whenever you screw up seek out the people whom you've harmed and let them know that you are truly sorry. And if you don't think you ever screw up, you're probably not paying close enough attention to the impact that you're having on the people around you.

Do you have sense of humor? I'm not talking about teasing people (especially people who report to you). When was the last time that you made a joke at your own expense?

It's not always the hare that wins the race, taking a slower path can help you finish ahead in the end.

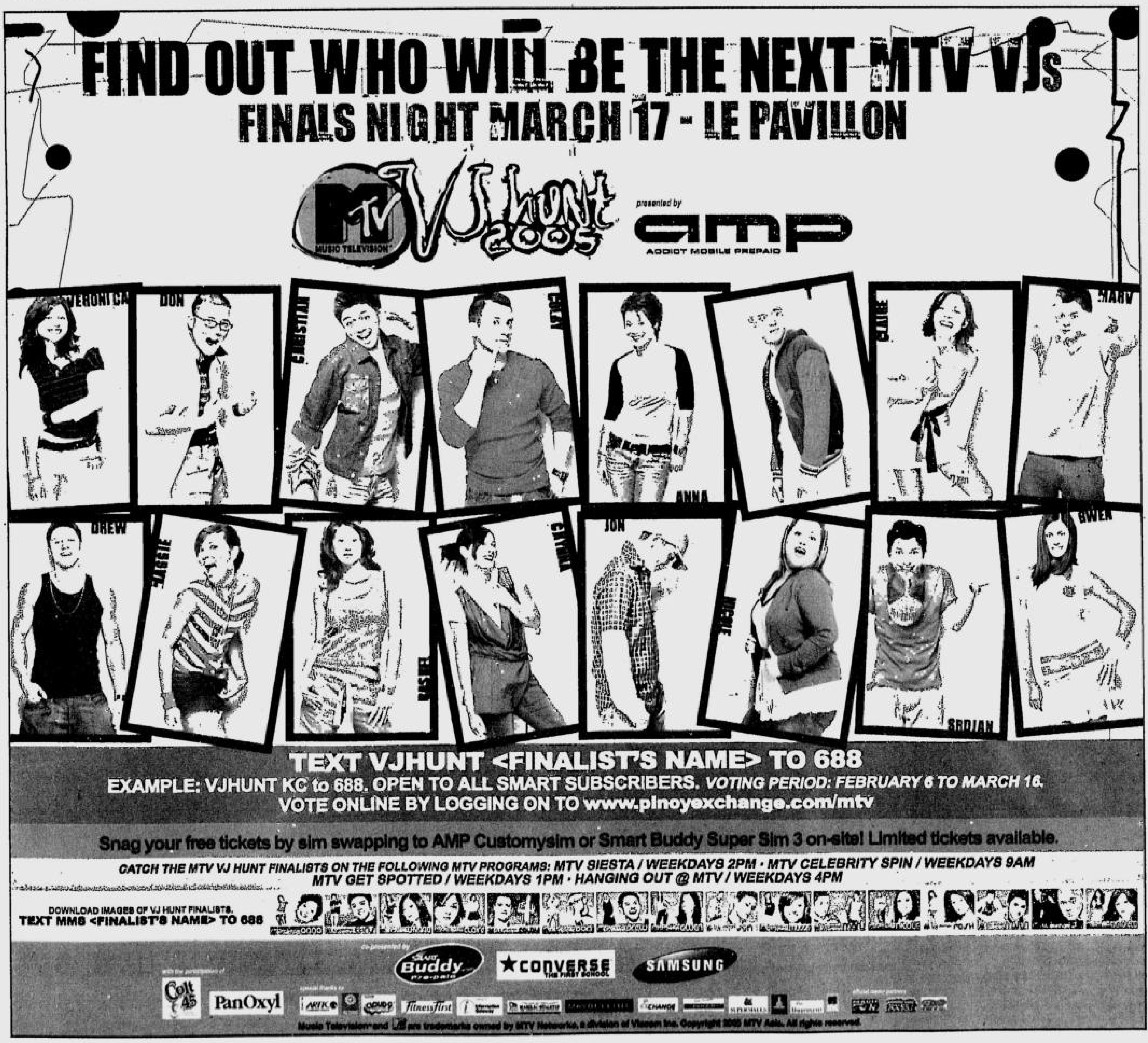
Here are the results from a recent workingwounded.com/ABCnews.com online ballot: Which best describes you at work?

—An accident waiting to happen, 4.6 percent

—Superhero, 33.7 percent

—Average guy, 61.5 percent

(Mr. Rosner, an internationally syndicated columnist, author and speaker, is based in Seattle, Washington, USA. E-mail him at bob@workingwounded.com.*)*



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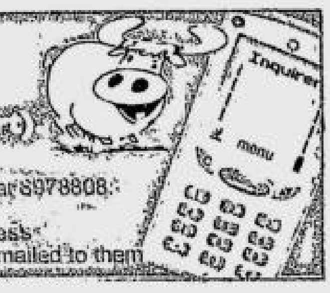


Comic book on Buffet is serious reading

By Regina Galang Reyes
People at Work Editor

THEY definitely don't make business books like they used to. In this "innovation economy," even supposedly staid publishing houses try to outdo each other by coming out with one innovative book after the other.

Here's one for the books (pun intended): John Wiley & Sons has come out just this year with, believe it or not, a "comic-strip biography" on the "superhero of finance," Warren Buffet, who has been ranked second on the list of the world's wealthiest people. Now, you cannot get a more conservative personality than Buffet but his awesome rise from paperboy to billionaire is a story that equals the super deeds of comic book superheroes. Thus, "Warren Buffet: An Illustrated Biography of the World's Most Successful Investor" by Ayano Morio is a book that merits serious reading by "wannabe" stock pickers and investors and anyone who is serious about getting ahead in life.

Translation not lost

This unique book is actually a translation by Mark Schreiber from the hugely successful Japanese edition by Ayano Morio. Morio studied oil painting at Musashino Art University where she made a debut as a cartoonist in 1982 in a monthly comic magazine. She is known for her non-fiction cartoons and published biographies of unique characters in Japanese history and the financial world.

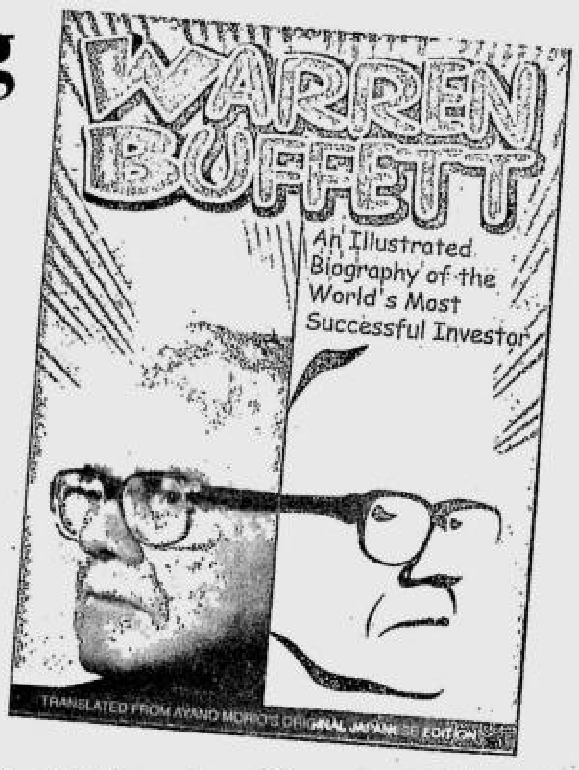
The book, in a glowing golden book cover, faithfully follows Buffet's life story, which has been chronicled in so many previously published books, but sticks to the basic story plot. The first page starts with a cute rendition of Buffet as a wailing infant (try to imagine this) in 1929 and provides a sketch of his family background and young entrepreneurial ventures that eventually led the young Buffet to a path of "billionaire-hood."

Rules for success

The book covers how Buffet met his own superhero, Benjamin Graham, and his initial forays into the investment world as an adult, including the sensational Salomon Brothers fiasco. Of course, the intricate ramifications of Buffet's investment decisions and their consequences are not dealt with in the book unlike in other text heavy Buffet biographies. But the nice thing is, the book does synthesize in seven simple statements Buffet's rules for success. Each rule is generously illustrated in the book and provides good benchmark information for new Buffet fans and novice investors.

To learn from Buffet's success and be able to apply some of the lessons to one's own career and life do require some serious thinking. In this regard, the book tends to oversimplify a complicated career and the workings of Buffet's brilliant mind. Stock market investing is not exactly a simple task and it needs sharp insights on Buffet's investing style to be able to fully benefit from his experiences. Thus, while the book is highly entertaining and readable, it behooves the reader, if this is the first book on Buffet he has read, to continue on to reading other books, not necessarily biographies, on Buffet.

This illustrated biography though is a good source of life lessons for anyone wanting to rise up from hardships or mediocrity to a level of success that others may just dream about. Well, isn't this why superheroes were created in the first place? With this book, count Buffet in as one of the newest members of the "league of extraordinary gentlemen."


WARREN BUFFETT
An Illustrated Biography of the World's Most Successful Investor
TRANSLATED FROM AYANO MORIO'S ORIGINAL JAPANESE EDITION

Eight antidotes for destructive politicking in the office

By Cymbeline Refalda-Villamin
Contributor

POLITICS is the craft of governance. According to various sources from the Internet, in practice, politics is a complex system of alliances, negotiations and compromises where the desired outcome is maintaining the good will of the electorate and one's political party in power. From "Politicians and Other Scoundrels" by Ferdinand Lundberg, politics is defined as the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedies.

This last definition fits my experience of "office politics." I was a victim of such politics but am now on the way to putting together the pieces of my work life. Here are some of the lessons I learned from that experience.

1. **Know yourself very well and always act with integrity.** If you think you know yourself completely, think twice and have an honest-to-goodness self-examination. If there is anything that you are doing now that makes you feel uneasy, ask yourself why. Define integrity for yourself and live by your standards honestly. Be careful not to deceive yourself. For if you deceive yourself, what will keep you from telling little white lies that may evolve into bigger untruths that will destroy you and others?

2. **Have courage to discuss issues with colleagues in plain and kind language.** Is there anything that needs to be explained? Do not be lazy or proud to make the first move. Initiate or request for an official meeting or an informal one over lunch or snacks to clarify matters of doubt. Talk in a simple and calm manner. Exhaust your arsenal of euphemisms and if you really have to use a "cruel" term, deliver it in an objective manner, because you are just using the term for accuracy and precision of meaning, and not to hurt or offend. If you are provoked to anger in any manner for whatever reason, do not give in.

3. **Control and manage your anger.** How do you control your anger? Take a deep breath. Excuse yourself for a while and get out of the room. Have a refreshing drink. Remind yourself that saying bad words, slamming the door, or walking out of a meeting are unproductive and undignified. A better option than controlling anger is managing it by preparing for it. What is it that will possibly make you angry during an office meeting? For example, insinuations of dishonesty, graft and corruption? If these will make you explode, then teach yourself how to face such insinuations. Encourage colleagues to ask you questions and answer them point-by-point with the aim of proving your innocence. Whether they seem to believe you or not, thank them for the opportunity to explain your side. For sure, there will be future opportunities to explain further. Just be patient.

4. **Be humble.** Humility can be very liberating and empowering. It gives you freedom from always trying to be perfect. It empowers you to seek outside help and not burden yourself too much. Humility on your part gives a signal to your colleagues that you are a part of the team and they can rely on you to work for a common goal. Be quick to say "I'm sorry" for any offense whether real or imagined. Take every opportunity that colleagues offer for bonding—eating out, bowling, aerobics, basketball, drinking, malling, movies, etc.

5. **Respect your enemy.** If, even after trying hard to avoid it, you find yourself in the thick of a fight, stick to the honorable rules of combat. No derogatory or obscene name calling, no physical violence or attempt to annihilate and murder. How does one get angry in an honorable way? The only basic guideline is

EIGHT/B15

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PC Express - Cebu	234-3551/4386
Thinking Tools	254-2227
ILOILO (+033)	
Concept Computer Center	337-7221/6874, 335-0753
Data Merchandizing	335-0858,336-3196/4509
LAS PINAS CITY (+02)	
NT Computer Mart - Southmall	802-2180
LEGASPI (+052)	
All Electronics	480-6011/6215, 820-2922, 214-3481
MAKATI (+02)	
Best Buy Computer Inc.	894-2671
Electroworld (Greenbelt 1)	813-2654, 892-9120
Electroworld (Parksquare 1)	812-3880, 813-2776/6145
Imaginet International	895-9755
Infoworx Incorporated	897-5384/4521
Microbase Incorporated	813-7603
Micro Pacific Tech & System Corp.	840-4563
PC Corner - Glorietta	893-0530
PC Express - Pasong Tamo	893-9537/9505
Prodata Systems	894-1571/1576, 845-1880, 888-8556
Vilman Computer System Inc - Ayala	892-2222,893-0532
MANDALUYONG (+02)	
Accent Micro - Megamall Branch	634-2417
Brochiere Megamall	633-8221/2172-73, 634-1296/4801
Electroworld	633-1624
PC Corner	636-5373, 631-8786, 723-1737
PC Express - Shaw	718-3939
PC Express - Shandan	633-4370/2441
PC Live - Megamall Branch	634-2439
NT Computer Mart - Shang-rila Plaza	634-4347
NT Computer Mart - SM Megamall	633-4690
Vilman Computer System Inc SM Mega Mall	683-0532 to 33
MANILA (+02)	
Best Buy Computer Inc.	254-8588/8676
BPL	302-6327
Information Products Corporation	721-5250
Integrated Computer Systems, Inc.	727-3801
Jostech	521-5310
SVC Enterprises	522-8603 to 06
Total Quality Machines	526-4503 local 21 & 22
MUNTINLUPA CITY (+02)	
Accent Micro - Festival Mall Branch	771-0779
NAGA CITY (+054)	
All Electronics	811-3624/5
NAKPIL, MALATE (+02)	
Columbia Technologies	524-0393, 400-7981
OLONGAPO CITY (+047)	
Vilman Computer System Inc.	224-6881
PASIG (+02)	
Complink Marketing	687-1234/3160
QUEZON (+02)	
Accent Micro - North Edsa Branch	426-9829
Bias Edward's Computer	434-4967/8
My Mobile Solution Computer Shop - Eastwood	687-2559
NT Computer Mart - SM North	927-2579
PC Click Computer Center - Gilmore	705-1734/1488, 724-5798/5378
PC Corner - Gilmore	723-1718, 726-7858
PC Corner - West Ave	921-2006
PC Express - Gilmore	726-5041
PC Express - Katipunan	433-6800/6802/6804
PC Gilmore	410-1210, 721-3496
PC Live - North Edsa Branch	925-5888
Silicon Valley	371-5614 to 20
The Web Diamond Computer System	725-0173/6
Vilman Computer System Inc. - Eastwood City	687-43/47
Vilman Computer System Inc. - Pag-asa	929-041, 920-6464 to 67
Vilman Computer System Inc. - Cubao	912-8172
Vilman Computer System Inc. - SM North Edsa	928-7322 to 33
Vilman Computer System Inc. - West Avenue	373-9872 to 76
SAN JUAN (+02)	
Acenet MicroComputer	725-0762/0759/4276
PC Corner - Virra Mall	727-1834
PC Quarters - Virra Mall	721-0361
PC Express - Edsa	726-0410/3959/5918
SORSOGON (+056)	
All Electronics	211-1515, 421-5224
TONDO MANILA (+02)	
PC Express - Abad Santos	253-9832/1024

D-Link®
Building Networks For People
www.dlink.com.ph

Go Unlimited with Sky Internet 499

A COMPUTER with Internet connection is now an indispensable household utility, which constantly changes the way we communicate, work, and play. The kids connect to the Internet to conduct research for doing class assignments or to play their favorite online game. Mom goes online to check on her e-mail from relatives and friends abroad or browses the net for exciting recipes; while dad has to check on his favorite news and sports sites.

Thus, there is stronger demand for a reliable Internet service that wouldn't eat up a lot of the household expenses. Recognizing this, Bayan Telecommunications (BayanTel), one the country's leading dial-up Internet service providers, has launched Sky Internet 499, the low-priced premium quality post-paid dial-up plan that offers unlimited Internet connection.

With Sky Internet 499 Unlimited, there's no need to load up on pre-paid Internet cards. There's no need to monitor usage during peak hours to manage the monthly fees. Instead, users pay a fixed rate of only P499 per month for hassle-free, unlimited Internet.

According to BayanTel vice president for Metro Manila retail market Rodrigo Montinola, Sky Internet will now be offer packages with unlimited Internet in response to the market's demand for fast, reliable and reasonably priced Internet services.

Montinola believes that the concept of unlimited Internet, often associated with high-priced DSL plans, presents a better deal to consumers who are tired of confusing, multi-tiered, pay-per-use packages out in the market today.

"By offering purely unlimited Internet for a fixed and affordable monthly charge, we believe we are further building up Sky Internet's market position as among the pioneering and innovative Internet service providers in the country. An unlimited package spells out in clear terms the amount a subscriber needs to pay on a monthly basis without the hassle of monitoring additional charges for use during peak hours or going beyond the hours prescribed under their plan."

Montinola also stressed that Sky Internet 499 is a regular subscription plan and not just a promotional offer. He disclosed that the price point was borne out of a research conducted by BayanTel, which showed that an average pre-paid Internet user spends P100 for a pre-paid card once a week, which amounts to P400 per month.

"Based on the results of our research, we believe Sky Internet 499 offers superior value to users by providing unlimited Internet connection using any telephone service. By offering unlimited Internet at a fixed rate, we are providing the growing mass of Internet users the best value for their Internet needs, while encouraging more households to hook up without the fear of paying for fluctuating monthly charges."

Apart from Sky Internet 499 Unlimited, BayanTel also launched other unlimited packages with varying superior value-added services.

BayanTel promises to continue delivering fast and reliable connection that Sky Internet has long been noted for.

Aside from its new unlimited packages, the company also introduced XLR8 Technology, a new feature exclusive to Sky Internet users that accelerates dial-up surfing up to six times.

XLR8 Technology works by decreasing transmission traffic through compression, caching and blocking of ads. It also comes with privacy and security features that shield computers from viruses and other annoying and harmful applications acquired from the web.

XLR8 is offered for free to Sky Internet 799, 1299 and 1999 Unlimited. Sky Internet 499 Unlimited subscribers can also avail themselves of the service at a minimal fee.

"XLR8 along with other value-added services such as POP3/SMTP e-mail accounts, web space and domain registration, further underscores Sky Internet's affordable but high-value service to its subscribers."

For inquiries and applications, simply call 411-2000 or 449-3297, or visit www.skyinet.net.

SCA BRANDS IN SHELL SELECT, SHELL SHOPS
Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp recently signed an exclusive contract with SCA Hygiene Products Corp, makers of Softee bathroom and facial tissues, Softee Gem table napkins, Tena adult diapers, Libresse feminine pads and liners, and Drypers baby diapers, to carry their assortment of high-quality hygiene products in Shell Select and Shell shops nationwide. Spearheading this deal are (seated from left) Joseph Martem, national sales manager for General Trade of SCA, and Jay Quizon, convenience retailing manager of Pilipinas Shell. Acting as witnesses are (standing from left) Gary Severino, SCA regional sales manager, and Cholo Francisco, Shell category manager.

Education upgrade key to up investments

THE COUNTRY needs to upgrade its education system and the quality of its human resources in order to attract increased foreign and local investments.

This was stressed by Dr. Osman Atac of the United Nations' International Trade Center (ITC), citing the urgency of the situation.

Dr. Osman Atac heads the enterprise management and development section (EMDS) of the ITC headquarters in Geneva, which assists developing countries in improving their economic performance, especially in exports.

"People, not roads and buildings, do business. If the education system is not upgraded rapidly, it will have an effect on investments directly because corporations do business globally and they prefer to be in a country where they can conduct ICT (information communication technology) type of transactions," Atac explained.

He indicated the country's need for managers with competence in ICT-based operating systems that could help bring about cost-efficiency in their business operations.

"Cost efficiency is about what you get in return, which depends on the manager making rational calculations. Most managers don't have that competence," Atac pointed out, citing a move by the ITC to spawn a new breed of Filipino managers through a diploma course developed in Geneva, Switzerland.

The ITC is bringing the diploma course to the Philippines through its partner, the Association of Training Institutions for Foreign Trade in Asia and the Pacific (Atiftap).

An agreement has been forged between Atiftap and the De La Salle-College of St. Benilde (DLS-CSB) to make the course available to the country's aspiring managers, enterprise owners and entrepreneurs.

The course, which will be offered by DLS-CSB starting May 13 this year, involves special training in the use of frameworks, systems, technology and other EMDS materials from Switzerland.

More information can be obtained from the DLS-CSB at 400-5425 or from Atiftap at 834-1350.

Atiftap president Luz T. Suplico said the course was designed to ensure the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the global market.

SMEs and all other enterprises are among the three major players in e-commerce. The other two, according to Atac, are the macro-level consisting of government policy makers and state enterprises, and the meso-level composed of training institutions, business solutions, program writers, and Internet service providers.

Atac first came to the Philippines in 1990 when he was stationed in Manila up to 1995 as ITC adviser for Asia Pacific. He used to hold office at the Philippine Trade Training Center managing all kinds of capability-building programs.

Atac returned to the United States in 1995, joined the ITC headquarters in Geneva in 1996, and assumed his current post in 2001.

As chief of the ITC's enterprise management and development section, Atac is responsible for the management competence development of SMEs.

Rockwell Club's Le Souffle at Fernando's opens

FRENCH-inspired fine dining restaurant Le Soufflé has found a new home at the posh Fernando's at the Rockwell Leisure Club in Rockwell Center. And its formal opening brings with it the promise of an exceptional dining experience.

Le Soufflé at Fernando's offers a rich fusion of flavors and its carte du jour boasts of all-time favorites alongside tempting new dishes for the picky pallet and discriminating diner on the look out for something new, yet from a name they already know and trust.

While maintaining Fernando's reputation of a lavish yet simple, elegant yet cozy dining haven, Le Soufflé adds a new and exciting twist courtesy of its co-owner and chef Jessie Sincioco.

Before she opened Le Soufflé (with partners chef William King and chef Andreas Katzer) in 1991, chef Jessie started her career off at the Hotel Inter-Continental lasting seven years. Spanning a 21-year-long love affair with the culinary arts, chef Jessie has made her mark in the industry with her expertise and uncompromising talent as a homegrown premier chef to date. She once again rolls up her sleeves, this time around with a new slant in the food and beverage industry with Le Soufflé at Fernando's.

"I wanted to create something different, something that is distinct and could only be found at the Rockwell Club. While most of what we offer in our other outlets would be a staple at Le Soufflé at Fernando's, we would have menu offerings that would be directly associated with the Club, creating excitement among our loyal clients while leaving a lasting impression on our new diners and have the lot coming back for more," says chef Jessie.

Aside from Le Souffle's all-time favorite entrées, the Grilled Chilean Sea Bass and the delectable Baked Rack of Lamb, other unique offerings await the avid food enthusiast. Chef Jessie's own delightful creations include Alugbati Salad with arugula, Parmesan flakes and crunchy prosciutto, and Pesto a la Jessie with prawns, scallops, salmon, sun-dried tomatoes, asparagus and Parmesan flakes. The Cheese, Spinach and Mushroom Souffle is also a signature that has remained quite in demand.

LE SOUFFLE and Rockwell make good food and good music together. Shown are chef Jessie Sincioco and Manuel Lopez.

No meal is complete without a dose of sugar. Lavish desserts such as the luscious French Chocolate Gateau and the classic Mango Jubilee are just hints of what Le Souffle at Fernando's offers. And for the health-conscious, the Sugar-Free Dark Chocolate Mousse is a must-try.

"Requests are also pouring in for the inclusion of dishes for those on a South Beach Diet. And I have been putting it together for Le Souffle at Fernando's so watch out for it," adds chef Jessie.

For inquiries, call restaurant manager Raquel Abordo at 450-2993 or 450-2995.

HONDA CARS PHILIPPINES INC.
DONATION
ENGINE AND TRANSMISSION SET
JACOBO GONZALES MEMORIAL SCHOOL OF ARTS and TRADE

HONDA GRANTS ENGINE AND TRANSMISSION SET
In its continuing effort to promote manpower development of future technicians, Honda Cars Philippines Inc (HCPI) recently donated an engine and transmission set to Jacobo Z. Gonzales Memorial School of Arts and Trade (JZGMSAT) in Biñan, Laguna. With its donation of a complete PGM-Fi engine and transmission set to JZGMSAT, HCPI hopes to contribute to the school's effort to impart high-quality technical training by providing training program and training modules to its instructors. Rep. Uliran T. Joaquin of the First District of Laguna received the engine and transmission set in a simple turnover ceremony held at JZGMSAT campus. Established in 1960 by the late Laguna Rep. Jacobo Z. Gonzales, JZGMSAT provides purely technical education to less-fortunate students to help them become more well-formed individuals fully equipped with technical skills. JZGMSAT has been mandated to be under the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda) as provided for in RA 7796. Shown from left are lawyer NR Joaquin Jr; Arnel Doria, Honda deputy head for marketing, Paz Urcia, Tesda provincial director; Fred Magpayo, Honda VP for administration; Rep. Uliran T. Joaquin; Honda president and GM Mitsunari Takano; Robert Niez, JZGMSAT administrator; Danny Pedro, Honda AVP for service, and Susan de la Rama, Tesda Regional Director.

Bits Clips

DLS-GSB off to Bangkok tilt

5 MBA students of the De La Salle Professional Schools Inc Graduate School of Business are set to represent DLS PSI-GSB in the AMC 2005 Business Plan Competition to be held in Bangkok, Thailand this March, after besting several competing schools from Metro Manila. The team of Ana Aduna, Isabel Baruelo, Analei Castillo, Sarah Claudio and Jennifer Orfanel, together with faculty adviser professor Emilio Bruan Jr, bagged third place in the recently concluded 'Battle of the Business Plans' held at the New World Hotel, Makati City. The first and second placers were non-collegiate teams. Battle of the Business Plans is an initiative of the Global Entrepreneurship Network-Philippines (GEN-P), an international collaboration of Filipinos and partner institutions. Founded by Filipino alumni and students from Harvard University, GEN-P is seeded by the Entrepreneurship Club of Harvard Business School.

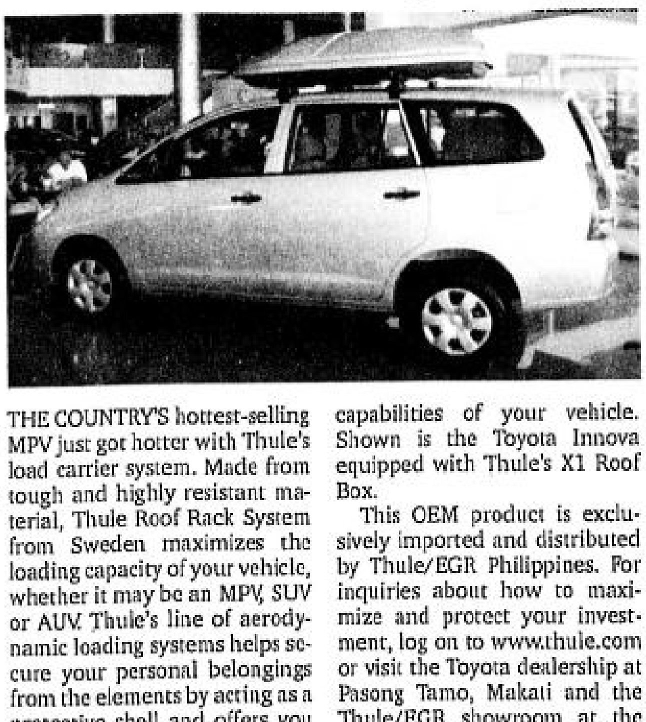
Ducks Unlimited promo

DUCKS Unlimited has just launched a discount promo as a pre-summer treat for all its loyal customers. Starting March 1, enjoy 10 to 50-percent discounts on selected items from Ducks Unlimited shops in SM-Marilao, SM-Southmall, Festival Mall, Shoppesville-Greenhills, Glorietta 3-Makati, Ali Mall-Cubao, Robinsons Ermita, Robinsons Pioneer, Robinsons Galleria, SM-Pampanga and Century Park Sheraton Hotel. The promo is ongoing until March 31. Ducks Unlimited is a locally manufactured line of shirts, pants, shorts and jackets for men, women and children, made of 100-percent Egyptian cotton for that cool and comfortable fit. The brand has been modeled by popular UAAP collegiate basketball players.

More PEP on B10, B20, and B19

Product FILES

'Innovative' gear



THE COUNTRY'S hottest-selling MPV just got hotter with Thule's load carrier system. Made from tough and highly resistant material, Thule Roof Rack System from Sweden maximizes the loading capacity of your vehicle, whether it may be an MPV, SUV or AUV. Thule's line of aerodynamic loading systems helps secure your personal belongings from the elements by acting as a protective shell and offers you the convenience of a portable baggage compartment. Its easy-on and easy-off feature makes it the practical gear to expand the capabilities of your vehicle. Shown is the Toyota Innova equipped with Thule's X1 Roof Box.

This OEM product is exclusively imported and distributed by Thule/EGR Philippines. For inquiries about how to maximize and protect your investment, log on to www.thule.com or visit the Toyota dealership at Pasong Tamo, Makati and the Thule/EGR showroom at the Equitable Bank Building, Ortigas corner Roosevelt Streets, Greenhills, San Juan or call 744-6367.

DOH, Bayer ES launch Leptospirosis prevention campaign

THE RAINY season marks the onset of many water-borne diseases. And one of the most commonly overlooked and disregarded, and often times misdiagnosed diseases is Leptospirosis.

Leptospirosis is caused by pathogenic spiral bacteria belonging to the genus leptospira, which burrows itself to the host tissue, found in the urinary shredding of infected animals. The common sources worldwide of these bacterial pathogens are rats and rodents. Contact with the organism via infected urine-contaminated media including animal bedding, mud and floodwaters, result in human infection. The organism usually enters the body through abraded skin or mucous membranes. Occasionally, the organism may enter the body through intact skin.

Leptospirosis may be spread in large population in conditions of widespread flooding common in many areas in Metro Manila and nearby towns during the rainy season, as infected rats may infect sewer waters, which tend to overflow with rainwater. Partial or total immersion of mud and water plays a role in infection.

According to the most recent data of the DOH on Leptospirosis in the National Capital Region (NCR), Manila is found to have the highest frequency of 37.5 percent; followed by Quezon City with 25 percent; Caloocan with 18.8 percent and Malabon, Parañaque and Taguig with 6.3 percent each. Frequency is also highest during the rainy months of June to September, though cases are still reported up to the month of November. No fatality has been recorded yet for 2004.

Most cases occur in men, probably because they are employed in at-risk occupation such as sewer workers and emergency workers during flooding calamities, as well as "seasonal workers" such as pedicab drivers, makeshift boat and trail-bridge operators and manual towers of stranded vehicles. In 2003 alone, 90.5 percent of recorded leptospirosis patients were male, however, with the change in social roles, more cases are now being seen in women and children.

After the pathogen gain entry via skin or mucosa, the organism multiplies in blood and tissue then spreads in the body, particularly the meninges, liver and the kidney causing meningitis, jaundice (Weil's disease), edema, necrosis and kidney failure. These organisms may also affect the eye causing chronic or recurrent uveitis.

The natural course of the disease falls in two distinct phases after incubation of 7-12 days. During the first stage, the patient develops flu-like symptoms of varying severity - fevers, chills, weakness, myalgias, sore throat, cough, chest pains, rash, headache, mental confusion and other symptoms of meningitis.

Then after about 4-7 days, the patient becomes asymptomatic which marks the second stage of leptopirosis when clinical or subclinical meningitis appears, as well as infection of organs like liver, eyes and kidneys. Many patients (77 percent) experience severe headache that is poorly controlled by analgesics and painkillers and it is often the sign of the onset of meningitis. 2-10 percent of patients may develop eye infection. 50 percent could develop renal symptoms, while pulmonary manifestations occur in 20-70 percent of patients.

Despite the possibility of severe complications - including secondary end-organ injury, the disease is most often self-limited and can be treated successfully with antibiotics if diagnosed early. But just like any other diseases, prevention of Leptospirosis is almost always better than curing it.

Because of this, The Department Of Health, together with Bayer Environmental Science (ES) recently launched an awareness and prevention campaign against Leptospirosis. The campaign aims to minimize the spread and eventually the eradication of the disease - the best way of which is to eradicate its main source- the Rats and Rodents.

Bayer ES donated Racumin products to Center for Health Development Metro Manila for dissemination in highly at-risk areas commonly affected by floods during rainy season. Racumin is an effective and cost-efficient rodent and rat killer. Racumin is proven to slowly but surely kill rodents without them noticing it. It comes in three forms: Racumin Tracking Powder, Racumin Ready-Made Bait and Racumin Paste.

For more information about Leptospirosis, interested parties may call the Center for Health Development MM hotline at telephone numbers 535-4521 or 535-4529 or Bayer Philippines at telephone numbers 450-3537 / 450-3758 / 450-3575.

Maguirig, Solana, Cagayan

Kagalanggalang Gloria Macapagal Arroyo
Pangulo, Republika ng Pilipinas
Palasyo ng Malacañang

Mahal Naming Pangulo,

Kami po ay nakatira sa isang liblib na lugar, sa Barangay Maguirig, Solana lalawigan ng Cagayan. Ibig po naming ipa-alam/isangguni ang matagal na naming problema, naniniwala po kami na sa iyong kamay malulutas ang suliraning ito:

1. Mahirap lang po kami, wala po kaming sariling lupain sa kapatagan. Dahil po dito, napilitan kaming humanap ng lugar na puwedeng tamnan pangkabuhayan. Matagal na po naming sinasaka ito, simula pa noong dekada 70, hanggang sa dumating po ang Solana Reforestation Project ng DENR noong 1978, hindi po nila kami ginambala bagkus naging kabisig kami sa programa, wala pong problema sa puntong ito, subalit asam namin na sana po mabigyan din kami ng katibayang pagmamayari sa lupang sinasaka namin.

2. Isang araw po ay may isang nagngangalang Gng. Nerina Padilla, (ina ni Atty. Victor Padilla), hindi po nakatira sa aming Barangay na nagsabi na kanya raw ang buong Reforestation Project na ito. Ibig sabihin po, ay halos buong lupain sa Barangay na ito ay pagmamay-ari niya (Nerina Padilla). Nagulat po kami, bakit ganun? Kaming nabigo, isang tao lamang ang nakinabang? Talo po ang Gobierno subalit higit na kaming taga Maguirig ang talo nito. Matagal na pong panahon na kami'y naghintay sa resulta ng paglilitis sa kasong ito "Solana Reforestation Project (DENR) vs. Nerina Padilla" ngunit sa sandaling ito nasa "Solicitor General" na daw ang kaso, ngunit hanggang ngayon wala pang resulta, Mahal na Pangulo. Hindi po maayos ang buhay namin dahil sa kasakiman ng taong ito *(Gng. Nerina Padilla)*. Naniniwala po kami na ang puso mo ay para sa mahihirap, at kalikasan para sa susunod pang henerasyon. Dalangin po naming Mahal na Pangulo na ang punong kahoy na tanim namin at lupa ay ibalik mo sa mga naghirap na "Taga Maguirig, Solana, Cagayan", hindi sa sakim na tulad ni Gng. Nerina Padilla. Hangad po namin ang tunay na katarungan kaya't pumirma kami ng aming pangalan.

MABUHAY KAYO!!! MAHAL NAMING PANGULO GMA.

1. INOCENCIO CONSTANTINO
2. Arcadio Magapay
3. Oscar Romero
4. Rufino Romero
5. Benjamin Doca
6. Villamor Garingga
7. JESSIE MALANA
8. RAQUEL MALANA
9. MARIA MALANA
10. Pedro Pascual
11. Roger Rosqueta
12. ERIC EDA
13. Rogelio Malana
14. Martin Sabinquin
15. Johannes Jose
16. Conrado Malana
17. Ronald Malana Rmalana
18. Juan Garingga
19. SALVADOR Jose
20. Marcelo Castro
21. Avelino G. Rafael Rafael
22. MICHAEL GARINGAN
23. Mario Batista
24. HENRY D DABON
25. Leonardo Gabriel L.P
26. BERNARDO MABBORANG Bernardo Mabborang
27. JUANITO SABADO Juanito Sacado
28. Nilson Gabriel Nilson Gabriel
29. BASILIO ASUNCION JR. BASILIO ASUNCION JR.
30. JERRY D. SOLIVA
31. Federico Gabriel
32. Romeo Ocundo
33. Eduardo Zinampan RB
34. Jay Bartolome
35. Malbert Behagan Malbert Behagan
36. Bealis Dugayag
37. Rogelio Bapay
38. ALLAN ASUNCION A-ASUNCION
39. Cornelio Bartolome
40. Cornelio Bartolome Jr. Bartolome Jr.
41. Ernesto magapay
42. Roel maglapay
43. ROWEL PATTUNG Rowel Pattung
44. LEONARDO DOCA Leonardo Doca
45. FLORENTINO CASTRO Florentino Castro
46. AVELINO . CASTRO Avelino Castro
47. PABLITO MEDINA Pablito Medina
48. LARRY SOBELANO LSOBELANO
49. SILVINO BARTOLOME Bartolome
50. MAMERTO [illegible] mamerto [illegible]
51. VINCENT MARALLAG
52. Jaime Sinitan
53. Virgemo Sabado

People, Events & Products

E-mail: pr_pep@inquirer.com.ph
aespinosa@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Globe remains confident with own unlimited call/text promo

IN THE face of fierce competition among telcos in the unlimited call-and-text arena, Globe Telecom remains confident that its own Touch Mobile (TM) Todo Text and Todo Tawag Text promo, which was launched earlier this week, will be a strong contender in the price-sensitive market.

TM segment head Nonie Busuego explained that the TM promo has features that make it more convenient and cost-effective than those of rival networks. First, subscribers are assured of longer talk time in the unlimited call scheme. Under Todo Tawag Text, the limit for calls is 30 minutes, as compared to other networks where calls are cut after 5 to 15 minutes. This allows subscribers to maximize the unlimited calling privilege provided by the promo without having to redial the same number to continue a conversation.

The TM promo also offers a combined call-and-text option, where subscribers can avail themselves of 30 days unlimited SMS and voice. A similar promo from a competing network only provides either unlimited calling or texting, but not a combination of the two. The flexibility of TM's scheme would benefit value-conscious Pinoy consumers, who generally prefer texting as a means of communication but also rely on their mobile phones to make important calls while on the go.

More importantly, the TM Todo Tawag Text promo is the most convenient way to avail yourself of unlimited service among the buffet pricing schemes currently being offered by various telcos. Other networks require the subscriber to either buy a special prepaid card for the promo, or to text in the number they wish to call before the system can make the connection, similar to the procedure for making an operator-assisted call. By contrast, TM subscribers simply have to register in the promo and then proceed to use their cell phones to call and text directly.

Busuego further pointed out that the TM promo gives subscribers the best value for their money, with the unlimited service only costing P10 per day. This is currently the lowest price among existing offers. "In these economically challenging times, TM understands and responds to the consumers' need to stretch their peso," she said. "Todo Text and Todo Tawag Text offer reliable connectivity powered by Globe's wide network coverage, as well as value for money, which is a major concern for the price-sensitive market."

Globe also assured subscribers of its continuing commitment to providing quality service, saying that they have made technical adjustments to their network to guard against congestion and ensure that the unlimited call-and-text scheme will not adversely affect their experience.

The move is also seen to strengthen the recently relaunched TM brand and serve as an opportunity for the company's growth by opening up new venues for innovation. "By responding to the changing needs of our customers, Globe is exploring a significant and largely untapped market," stated Busuego. "We see our initial venture into buffet pricing as a way to reach out to price-sensitive consumers and to continue the Globe tradition of introducing innovative and empowering services."

TELETECH, SPHAIRON INK DEAL SERVICE UPGRADE

Teletech, a wholly owned subsidiary of Eastern Telecom with local exchange services in Manila, Caloocan, Novaliches and Region 2, recently sealed an agreement with Sphairon Access Systems Philippines Inc. The agreement formalizes the installation of a wireless local loop system in key areas in Tuguegarao and its neighboring towns. The technology that complements Teletech's existing wireless local loop provides an efficient telephone service that reaches out to hundreds of residents and businesses in the said region, particularly to town folks whose areas could not be covered by other operators' wireline facility. Being the first and only wireless operator in Tuguegarao, this development further affirms Eastern Telecom's commitment in providing quality communication services in the country. Shown during the signing are (from left) Virgil A. Pedro, Eastern Telecom VP for sales and marketing; Nenita Lim-Cruz, Eastern Telecom president and CEO; Olaf Ciachowski, Sphairon Access Systems Philippines Inc president and CEO, and Nestor T. Remata, Eastern Telecom VP for sales.

CENTRAL COLLEGES OF THE PHILIPPINES' NEW BUILDING

Soon after the celebration of its 50th year, the Central Colleges of the Philippines marked Jan. 24 as the formal inauguration date of its recently built College of Nursing Building. The building was named the Consorcia P. Reyes Hall on the occasion of the 100th birthday of the honoree. Over 250 guests attended the ceremony. The affair was highlighted by the attendance of distinguished guests such as CHED representatives and university presidents and chairpersons from CEU, FEU, JRU, MLQU, NU, Perpetual Help, TIP, UE, as well as Sen. Edgardo Angara (guest of honor), Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, Father Joaquin Bernas SJ (who concelebrated the mass), Sec. Obet Pagdanganan, Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, Spokesperson Didagen Dilangalen, and Representatives Antonino, Cerilles, Crisologo, Golez, and Valencia. The building (shown inset) houses the largest nursing skills laboratory in the country, and has completely equipped anatomy-physiology, microbiology-parasitology, chemistry and physics laboratories as well as air-conditioned classrooms and a multi-purpose gymnasium.

DLS-GSB HONORS KA PEPE DIOKNO

On Feb. 24, two days before his 83rd birthday and a day before the 19th Edsa I revolution anniversary, the late Senator and Justice Secretary Jose W. Diokno was honored by the De La Salle Graduate School of Business. The late Sen. Ninoy Aquino, professor Randy David and London's Amnesty International all described Diokno as 'the most brilliant Filipino', the 'best president we did not have' and the 'champion of justice and human rights in Asia,' respectively. Senators Joker Arroyo and Serg Osmeña III, Bro. Armin Luistro, president, DLSU, Dean Philip Juico of La Salle, Washington Sycip and Fernando Vitas were among Ka Pepe's friends who helped establish the Jose W. Diokno Professorial Chair in Business Law and Human Rights at De La Salle, where he graduated Summa Cum Laude in Accounting and topped the CPA board at the age of 18. He also topped the bar, without finishing a law degree. Shown, from left, are Nena I. Diokno, Ka Pepe's gutsy widow, Lucita Vitas, Sen. Serg Osmeña III, Diokno's martial law comrade, and Hernando Vitas during the event.

Summer workshops in Tagaytay

THE TAGAYTAY Film, Broadcast and Creative Workshops announced that it has moved its workshops to May 2005 due to several requests from participants.

The workshops, which have been conducted every summer and late October for the last three years, is a joint project of the Creative Media Professionals Guild of Asia and the Pacific (CMPGAP) and the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP).

The workshops are intensive, hands-on, live-in weeklong activities. Its regular courses are video production, how to be an effective on-cam television talent, film directing, cinematography, scriptwriting, production design, digital editing, publications design, and crisis communication management.

Meanwhile, due to numerous requests for the Guild, the workshop is being brought to the province. Called the "Workshop Caravan", its first stop will be Pangasinan and La Union. For inquiries, call 925-1915 and look for Owen.

ADBOARD, INQUIRER WIN GOLD QUILL

AdBoard and the Philippine Daily Inquirer won a Gold Quill award for their joint event titled 'Cannes Lions in Manila'. AdBoard chair Raul Alvarez (2nd from right) is flanked by Alvin Manacsa, Cannes Lions in Manila 2004 co-chair (right) and Celine Madamba, chair of the Cannes Lions in Manila 2004 and Inquirer AVP for strategic marketing communications and Pepito Olarte, Inquirer VP for advertising (3rd from right).

Growlandtech receives PCIERD award

THE PHILIPPINE Council for Industry and Energy Research and Development (PCIERD) headed by Executive Director Graciano P. Yumul Jr, D. Sc., has chosen Growlandtech Corp as the recipient of the 2005 PCIERD Kabalikat Award for the private collaborator category.

PCIERD of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) recognizes that it is only through the synergistic partnership with the private and government, media and foreign agencies as well as with policy makers that it can achieve its program and contribute significantly to national development.

PCIERD is giving recognition to its partners through the PCIERD Kabalikat Award who have shown interest and invaluable support to science and technology, particularly in PCIERD's research and development.

Growlandtech Corp president and general manager Isidro C. Valencia will receive the award. As co-partner in developing and testing technology for export grade activated carbon, Growlandtech has provided livelihood to a good number of workers at Lopez, Quezon who are considered destitute of basic necessities in life including technology.

PCIERD will hold the Science & Technology Conference and Exhibit on March 16 during the PCIERD 23rd anniversary at Phivolcs Auditorium. PCIERD's theme: "Bringing SMEs to New Frontiers through Innovation," is a showcase of recognizing the importance of innovation and technology in the business world, how to survive the stiff market competition, and how develop science into an enterprise.

DOST Secretary Estrella F. Alabastro, PhD, will introduce the keynote speaker, National Economic Development director-general and secretary for Socio Economic Planning Romulo L. Neri. PCIERD Deputy Executive Director Raul Sabularse will deliver the closing remarks.

Product FILES

Judy Ann Santos endorses new Sara Lee fragrance

SARA Lee boasts of an illustrious list of endorsers-Piolo Pascual, John Lloyd Cruz, and Megastar Sharon Cuneta. This year they are proudly joined by the phenomenal actress of Philippine showbusiness, Judy Ann Santos. Endowed with unparalleled talent and a generous helping of star quality, it is no wonder why she has been chosen to be the signature model for an aptly named new fragrance from Sara Lee called Stellar.

Stellar is a breathtaking blend of sweet floral tuberose with musky green notes that is sure to make people's heads turn when they take a whiff of it. Spray a fine mist on your body with the body spray before you go out for an all-over superstar scent. Reapply with the handy rollette for an all-day celebrity aura. You can be as beautiful, mesmerizing and radiant as Judy Ann when you wear Stellar.

Stellar is available at Sara Lee Direct Selling-Philippines and authorized Sara Lee dealers nationwide. Sara Lee Corp (www.saralee.com) is one of the world's leading branded consumer packaged goods companies, selling its products in nearly 200 countries. For inquiries, call hotline at 810-5402, or e-mail customer.relations@saraleedirect-selling.ph.

Intro to centering prayer

EXPERIENCE the peace that surpasses all understanding. The "Introduction to Centering Prayer Retreat will be held from March 18 to 20, 12 noon Friday to 12 noon Sunday at the St. Joseph Marello Retreat House, Tagaytay City. Presented by Contemplative Outreach Philippines. Centering Prayer is a method designed to facilitate the development of Contemplative Prayer by preparing our faculties to receive this gift. Centering Prayer is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer; rather it casts a new light and depth of meaning on them. It is at the same time a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship. The Outreach also teaches Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading), particularly its movement into contemplative prayer as facilitated by a regular practice of Centering Prayer. For details, call 842-0201, 817-7251, 843-8291 or 843-8830 (Jazmin).

Six Sigma Quality

A SEMINAR on advanced total quality management known as Six Sigma Quality System will be held on March 17 and 18 at Traders Hotel Manila. Executives and managers responsible for quality and corporate excellence initiatives are invited. Six Sigma is a systematic strategy for corporate excellence, whose goal is to attain a quality level that allows a maximum of only three or four defects for every million units. Global companies like Motorola, Du Pont, GE, Honeywell, and Toshiba have claimed enormous amounts of savings and improvement in customer satisfaction through Six Sigma. The seminar is sponsored by Kaizen Management Systems Inc (www.kaizenmgtsys.com), which developed a local version of Six Sigma training and instructions for manufacturing and service industries. Interested parties can call 687-7059 to 60.

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We lovingly remember on
Her **FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY**

KATRINA DIAZ VILLAROMAN

April 8, 1993 – March 16, 2004
Graduating Grade School Student
of St. Theresa's College, Quezon City

Masses will be held on **March 16, 2005** at the following:

STO. DOMINGO CHURCH .... 8AM & 12:15NN
Quezon City
OUR LADY OF LOURDES PARISH 7:30AM
La Loma, Quezon City
SAN ANTONIO DE PADUA PARISH 6PM
West Riverside, Quezon City
ST. JOHN EVANGELIST PARISH 2PM
Tapulao, Orani, Bataan

We, the parents, **ERNIE & LHAY**; children, **ERLYNNE, CAMILLE & ERWIN** request prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

++++++++++++++++++

We would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to the people who have offered their prayers, sympathy and condolences, gave their support, and shared their kind words to comfort us in grief........ Wishing her memories will always remain in your hearts and prayers......

Dearly Beloved

Leonor Flores-Medina

(November 6, 1918 – March 14, 2005)
of Pasig and Parañaque, widow of ***Dr. Silvestre Tomas Medina,***
peacefully joined the Lord at the age of 86.

Her loving children:

VICTOR† and **Amelia Lazaro**, and children,
Elizabeth Victoria and **Carlo Llanes Navarro**, and daughter, **Angela Victoria**,
Angela Katrina and **Marcelo Torres Esguerra**, and
Kristina Isabela and **Robert Michael Nuval Baffrey**;

JULIETA and **Manuel Carpio Evangelista** and children,
James Richard,
Patricia,
Arthur Filoteo and **Ma. Teresa Nebres Dizon**,
Adrian Raymond
John André, and
Victor Florentino;

CRISTINO and **Rosalinda Lopez**, and children
Andrea Maria
Lorenzo Martin, and
Bianca Margarita;

and **ATTY. MELVIN FLORES FORTES, JR.**

request you to join them in prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at La Funeraria Paz, Sucat, Parañaque City.

Interment will be on Friday, March 18, 2005 at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque after the 2:00 p.m. Mass.

So Lovingly Remembered

on the 3rd Death Anniversary
of our Beloved

CESAR SEVILLA VIRAY

who passed on the eternal life
on 16 March 2002

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass shall be offered at the following churches:

Christ the King of the Universe Parish, *Bagbag, QC*	11:00 AM
The Parish of the Lord Divine Mercy, *Sikatuna Village, QC*	6:00 PM
Dela Strada Parish Church, *QC*	6:00 PM
Immaculate Heart of Marh Parish, *QC*	7:00 PM
Mount Carmel Shrine, *New Manila, QC*	7:00 AM
Parish of the Holy Sacrifice, *UP-Diliman, QC*	6:00 PM
Sta. Clara Parish Church	6:00 PM
Sto. Domingo Church, *QC*	12:15 PM

The family requests the pious readers to pray
for the eternal repose of his soul.

"Let the words of my mouth meet your Favor, keep the thoughts of my heart before you, Lord, my rock, my redeemer..."

— Psalm 21:15

Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

CORAZON RADAZA YCU

September 2, 1946 – January 31, 2005

and

JOSE RADAZA YCU

September 22, 1950 – February 6, 2005

wish to express our heartfelt gratitude and sincerest appreciation to all those who offered masses and prayers, sent flowers and messages of sympathy and who in countless ways, condoled with and comforted us in our hour of bereavement.

Patrick Lara Mangosing

of Bergenfield, New Jersey

Born August 29, 1984 in Manila
Died in a vehicular accident in Paramus, New Jersey
in the early morning of March 13, 2005.

His bereaved parents **Jose Patricio ("Bong")** and **Edith Lara Mangosing**, sisters **Rachelle, Sharon,** and **Valerie**; brothers-in-law **Jun Domingo** and **Alan Gutierrez**, niece **Ysabella** and nephew **Nico**, uncles and aunts, cousins, and other relatives request the reader to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains will be cremated and buried in Bergenfield on Saturday, March 19, 2005.

"For both in life and death we belong to God ..."

For information, please email Bing Mangosing (bmangosing@msn.com) or Mariles M. Besinga (lmbesinga@yahoo.com).

Our Dearly Beloved "Tatay"

Atty. FRANCISCO JAVIER C. MARIAZETA, Sr.

of Cubao, Quezon City and Lucban, Quezon
Died on March 15, 2005 at the age of 92.

His loving wife **Purificacion "Peping"**, children: **Boy & Lydia, William & Ermie, Tessie & Oliver de Ocampo, Cecille & Caesar Javier**, grandchildren **Sonny Boy & Winnie, Allan, Thirdy & Malynne, Kristine & Louie, Abigail, William Jr. & Cathy, Ritchie & Trisha, Katrina, Adam, Chinggay,** and great-grandchildren, other relatives and friends, request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Arlington Memorial Chapels (Felicidad Chapel), Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

Interment will be at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City after the 8:00 a.m. Mass on Sunday, March 20, 2005 at Arlington.

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord." — 2 Corinthians 5:8

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QUEZON CITY

KATIPUNAN Ext Coml 1200m² P9,500/m² 09189235216

VARIED AREAS

MAKATI
- Legaspi Vill. FCC Bldg. Rada 1/F Office Condo 3 units 35; 46; 46 sqm. P1.9M; P2.5M; P2.6M
- D. Valero St. Ayala North 5125 sqm vacant P150,000/sqm.
- Jupiter cor. 25,000 sqm comm'l. near Bel Air-2 P40,000/sqm
- Urdaneta Apts Ayala Ave. 3BDR/ 2TB Parking 1 Slot P16 M
- San Antonio Village Sampaloc, Lot 84 sqm w/ townhouse P6M;
  - Yakal St. 1445 sqm with two (2) storey bldg. P50,000/sqm.;

MANILA
- Sta. Cruz Rizal Ave. 1112 sqm P33,000/sqm Nr. Zurbaran
- Malate C. Aragon 293 sqm between Leon Guinto/Singalong P19,000/sqm;
  - Taft Ave/Indiana 2585 sqm P45,000/sqm;
  - Adriatico 1189 sqm. Nr. Malvar P65,000/sqm;
  - P. Ocampo (Vito Cruz) 1219 sqm P130M
- Valenzuela St., Sampaloc 1417.50 sqm. vacant lot w/ old house P23,000/sqm

PASAY
- Cuneta Ave. Rear Papa St. 2810 sqm Frontage 25.52M P37,000/sqm;
- Park Ave. Rear Primero de Mayo 1490 sqm Frontage 24.45M P25,000/sqm;
- Brgy. Sta. Clara G. Villanueva cor. 562 sqm P21,000/sqm;
- M. Dela Cruz off Arnaiz Ave (Dolores) 856 sqm P40,000/sqm;
- Armstrong Ave. Brgy. Merville 10,000 sqm P12,000/sqm

PARAÑAQUE
- Tambo Villamar 1st St 805 sqm with 2-storey bldg. Behind Pacific Coast Plaza P13,000/sqm;
- A. Santos Ave. (Sucat Rd) nr. BF Comm'l Center 17224 sqm Frontage 121M P20,000/sqm;
- Merville South Green Park. Lot 111 sqm w/ townhouse 3BDR/2TB P4M

MUNTINLUPA
- Alabang Hills Don Manolo Blvd Vacant 800sqm. P8M Nr. San Beda-Alabang
- Filinvest Corporate City Parque de España Res. 2 units 1BDR/TB; 2BDR/2TB Parking Slots 1 each P6M/P7M

PASIG
- Ortigas Ave. Ext. cor. 15,000 sqm P30,000/sqm
- Rosario Ortigas Ave. Ext 55,675 sqm Frontage 290.82 M P15,000/sqm;
- Raymundo Ave. Rosario (Pasig Blvd. Ext) 63,090 sqm with 6 warehouses P10,000/sqm

MANDALUYONG
- Ortigas Center San Miguel Avenue 10,509 sqm Frontage 112.03M P120,000/sqm

SAN JUAN
- Eisenhower Nr Club Filipino 1000 sqm P75M

QUEZON CITY
- 20th Avenue 1136 sqm P20,000/sqm
- Congressional Ave. Bahay Toro 6184 sqm. Frontage 27M P20,000/sqm
- Santol Puray Rd Vacant 4576 sqm P18,000/sqm
- EDSA 12,005 sqm Frontage 115M w/ 2-storey corner bldg. GFA: 8,112 sqm P45,000/sqm Nr Munoz Market
- Gen. de Jesus Corner, Lot 2100 sqm nr. Jusnag-Heroes Hill P20,000/sqm
- Aurora Blvd Corner, Lot 3460 sqm P25,000/sqm

MALABON
- M. H. Del Pilar Two (2) Adjacent Lots 6,096 sqm Frontage 84M P13,000/sqm;
- M. H. Del Pilar St. Tugatog 8154 sqm P10,000/sqm Nr. Sangandaan Market

ANTIPOLO
- Marcos Hi-way 360 sqm P15,000/ sqm Nr Masinag Market
- Bo. Campo Sauyo Circumferential Rd 10,054 sqm P8,000/sqm Nr. Budget Lane Supermarket

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HOUSE & LOT

MANILA

SAN ANDRES MANILA Bnew Twnhse/3stry/3br/3tb/grge P3.492M up 6903461 loc 34

MANDALUYONG

NEAR SHAW BLVD BnewTwnhse/3stry/3br/3-4tb/mdsrm 1-2grge P3.655M up 8903461

MARIKINA

Bnew 4BR 3TB 2.8M 9487112

PARANAQUE

PQUE 180m² 4BR 5TB ROOFTOP 3GRG 3MAIDS RM 9209202839 • 8431712

QUEZON CITY

CUBAO 160m² 5BR 3TB cor Notre Dame E. Garcia P3.4M 4224400 / 09162869670

'N.MLA 1Tm² 4121826;09177914366

•Sikatuna Vil. #81 Mahiyain• 9210255 9219907 9209822

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3400/mo 25yrs (0910)6363679

CONDO/TWNHSE

MAKATI

1.1M C5 Nr The Fort
10T/mo. or 4Yrs. No Int. or 10% D.P. LIPAT AGAD 2-4BR 15min Fr Mkti 0917-8313226

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CONDO/TWNHSE

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P1.5M 3Br Condo Nr Mkti Rey 0919-3178998 • 8736426

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MANILA

NR LA SALLE TAFT BnewTwnhse /4stry/3br/3tb/grge/mdsrm/deck P3.695M up 8903461

MANDALUYONG

RFO, 1BR 10%DP movein 90% (15yrs), 09192189817

PASIG

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QUEZON CITY

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APARTMENT

MANILA

4 DOOR APT CALL MRS UMALI 7355102 7319839

LOT

AYALA SOUTHVALE BACOOR CAVITE 499SQM 5.5M 09175274885 / 09174259753

LAS PINAS

AYALA SOUTHVALE-SONERA 500SQM up 0917-8997547

MUNTINLUPA

ALABANG HILLS
Don Manolo Ave 800 sqm.
P8M Nr. San Beda-Alabang
Tels: 818-2781 ; 751-5472
Cell: 0919-6745430

QUEZON CITY

300m² Lot w/ old house Boston St. Cubao nr Aur Bld. Txt at 09175457357 Call: 5349536 / 5346954

400m² CAPITOL PARK 9369719

10 COMM'L LOTS 216m²
along wide Zabarte Road
10yrs to pay or cash
LS Berlisan 9119637/4373077

RESIDENTIAL nr UP Atenao 204m² to 816m² P8,500/m² 09189235216

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

LOT

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240m²-up 3,568/m² 134T D/P 6 Mos to pay 6T Mo. nr Taal Vista 6609372

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CONDO UNIT
P2.4M w/ 2 Bedrooms, Toilet & Bath at Quadrillion Mansion, M. Paterno St. & N. Domingo, San Juan. Call Reynold CP# 09174327579

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

HOUSE

PARANAQUE

SUCAT CALL PM 8201453

CONDO/TWNHSE

MANILA

BAYBRIDGE HOME NR NAGTAHAN BLK2 LOT2 7361925

Bnew UNIT nr. LA SALLE-T 1BR T 7472043 • 09209262855

MANDALUYONG

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LOAN & MORTGAGE

BUSINESS, DOCTOR 524-3197

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

OFFICE SPACE FOR RENT

Balete QC 7240429 / 7217154

MALATE MLA 526-8048/49

TRANSPORTATION FOR SALE

CARS

FORD

FORD E350 ClubWagon TurboDiesel 620K 09174259753

RUSH '03 Expedition 4.2Lt. 4.6 GasEngine Red 370TKm 521-9343 / 44 Carmela, Erik; 632-1554 634-3294 Emma 1.9M

HYUNDAI

COUPE '97 A/T RED EXC COND 0917-8117864

MITSUBISHI

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NISSAN

'02 Frontier 0919-8707359

2005 BRAND NEW X-TRAIL 50 DP CEFIRO 73DP URVAN 98DP FRONTIER 73T PATRL 236 SENTRA13 NODOWN ACC EPT TRADEIN 09173823049

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1.5% Car Loan 5344441

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1.5% Easy Carloan 7815352/55

1.5% Fast Car Loan 6560140

1.5% w/oTaking Car 3650974/75

1.5% w/oTaking Car 7228942-43

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2% w/o Taking Car 7262780

2% w/o taking car 7880183-84

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- 21-30 years old
- At least two-year college or equivalent
- With pleasing personality, can speak English
- Can work long hours in a stressful environment

4-STAR and 5-STAR HOTEL PERSONNEL & BRAND NAME STORE SALES STAFF

- Female, single, 21-30 years old
- College graduate
- With pleasing, outgoing personality
- Speaks fluent English
- At least 5'2" in height

CONSTRUCTION LAB TECHNICIANS

- BS Civil Engineering graduate (Master's degree will be an advantage)
- Experienced in soils and construction materials testing
- 21-45 years old

Please submit two (2) copies each of:
- Resumé with detailed job description
- Professional license (if applicable)
- College diploma and transcript
- Birth certificate
- NBI clearance
- And four 2x2 close-up photos to

JOB STATION Company Inc.
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Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
(Head Office)

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) invites interested general building contractors currently with Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) License to apply for eligibility and if later found eligible, to bid for the project described below:

Project Title : Proposed PICC Project: Package 2a – Rehabilitation of the Fire and Water Damaged Areas of the Delegation Building of the Philippine International Convention Center
Scope of Work : Furnishing of all materials, labor, tools, equipment, technical supervision and other services and performing all operations necessary for the completion of the proposed rehabilitation of the fire and water damaged areas of the Delegation Bldg. of the PICC all in accordance with the approved plans and specifications and subject to the terms and conditions of the contract.
Project Location : PICC Complex, Pasay City
Approved Budget for the Contract : P265,464,500.40
Source of Funding : Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
Contract Duration : Three hundred forty calendar days (340 cd)
Minimum Eligibility Requirement (Criteria)
PCAB License : IAC Category Large "B" (Buildings and Industrial Plant)
Contractor's Construction Experience : Should have satisfactorily completed within the last five (5) years (2000 to present) at least three (3) projects involving construction/rehabilitation projects of similar Architectural and Engineering (A&E) works one of wich costs not less than ONE HUNDRED FIFTY MILLION PESOS (P150,000,000.00) such as construction / renovation involving architectural (including finishing, plumbing, mechanical and electrical works of commercial or institutional buildings requiring medium to high end finishes and good workmanship (projects may include offices, commercial centers, educational institutions, hotels and other of similar or greater complexity to the BSP's required project).
The contractor's project manager must be a licensed architect or civil engineer with at least ten (10) years experience in construction/rehabilitation with projects of similar nature.
Certification of Satisfactory Performance : Should be able to submit clients' certifications of Satisfactory Performance for (3) of the declared completes similar projects.
Net Financial Contracting Capacity : At least TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY MILLION PESOS (P270,000,000.00) computed as [(Current Assets minus Current Liabilities) (10)] minus the value of all outstanding projects under on-going contracts, including awarded contracts yet to be started)
OR
Credit Line/Cash Deposit Certificate Req't. : TWENTY-SEVEN MILLION PESOS (P27,000,000.00)
Eligibility Statement Forms
Cost of Forms : Two Hundred Pesos per set (P200.00/set)
Date of Issuance : March 17 to 30, 2005
Deadline of Submission : April 6, 2005
Date of Issuance of Notice of Eligibility/Ineligibility : April 18, 2005
Bid/Tender Documents : Shall be issued only to eligible contractors upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000.00)
Date of Issuance : April 18, 2005 to April 20, 2005
Pre-Bid Conference
Date and Time : May 10, 2005 / 10:00 AM
Venue : MR2A, 2nd Floor, BSP Main Complex, A. Mabini cor. P. Ocampo Sts.
Deadline of Submission and Opening of Bids : June 17, 2005 / 10:00 AM

For inquiries, please call BAC Secretariat – Telephone No. 524-7011 local 3143.

The venue for the issuance and submission of accomplished eligibility statements and bid documents is at the BAC Secretariat, Room 204, 2nd Floor – Five Storey Building, BSP Complex, A. Mabini cor. P. Ocampo Sts., Manila, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 nn & 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Schedule for issuance of notice of eligibility / ineligibility up to submission of bids may be subject to change.

Guidelines stipulated in the provisions of Republic Act No. 9184 & its implementing Rules and Regulations shall apply relative to the bidding and award of contract including its implementation.

BSP reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any defect or formality therein, or accept such bid or award any part thereof to any contractors whose bid/s is/are evaluated to be most advantageous to BSP. Furthermore, BSP is not obligated to compensate/indemnify the contractor for any expenses or loss that may be incurred in the preparation of bids nor does it guarantee that an award of contract will be made.

(Sgd.) JUAN DE ZUÑIGA, JR.
Chairman

(PDI-March 16 and 27, 2005)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS
Intramuros, Manila

ANNOUNCEMENT

Please be informed
that MARCH 18, 2005
is the last day of registration
for the August 8, 2005
ARMM elections.

TRANSPORTATION FOR RENT

CAR LOAN

2% w/oTaking Car 8870490/95

2% w/oTaking Car 7221021

2% w/oTaking Car 3732081/82

2% w/oTaking Car 8966630/33

2% w/oTaking Car 8959454

2% w/out taking car 5315577

2% w/out taking car 6567685

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DOG TRAINER 0919-3419012

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PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice of Loss: Capitol Hills Golf & Country Club Stock Cert. 776-B 1 share under the name of Jose Ramon Moll was declared lost. If no contest received w/in 1 yr new cert will be issued. (PDI- March 2, 9 & 16, 2005)

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given of the Extrajudicial Settlement of the Estate of LUDIVINA PINEDA with Waiver of Shares executed by the heirs on May 20, 2003, acknowledged before Atty. Elsa Verdadero-Perlas, Notary Public in and for the City of Pasig, entered in her notarial register as Doc. No. 934, Page No. 13, Book No. CVI, Series of 2003.
(PDI-March 2, 9 & 16, 2005)

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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BEAUTY PARLOR 4 SALE 4156051

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PORO POINT MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

A Subsidiary of Bases Conversion Development Authority

PORO POINT MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS
ASSET DISPOSITION PROGRAM

The Poro Point Management Corporation (PPMC) is inviting interested proponents to participate in the Asset Disposition Program (ADP). The ADP involves the development and privatization of the 65.5 hectares Tourism Complex and the 40 hectares Airport Area, covering a total area of one hundred five and a half (105.5) hectares, more or less.

Interested proponents should submit their Letters of Interest to PPMC and may purchase the Terms of Reference (TOR), which provide the requirements that will enable proponents to participate in the privatization.

The TOR for the project will be issued to interested proponents on March 16 to 18, March 21 to 23 and March 28 to 29 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the PPMC office, Pennsylvania Avenue, Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone, San Fernando City, La Union, upon payment of a non-refundable amount of PhP20,000.00 payable to PPMC in Cash or Manager's Check.

A conference involving interested proponents is tentatively set for March 31, 2005 at the PPMC Office. The objective of the conference is to discuss matters pertaining to the properties, the TOR and other things which interested proponents may wish to clarify. Interested proponents will be informed of the final schedule and venue of the conference through contact numbers submitted to the PPMC.

Interested proponents can direct their inquiries to:

THE CHAIRMAN
SPECIAL BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
Poro Point Management Corporation
Pennsylvania Avenue, Poro, San Fernando City
La Union

or they can contact Ms. Josefa Catherine T. Bada at telephone numbers 242-4016 or 888-5956 or send e-mail at ppmc@sflu.com.

(Sgd.) **ATTY. ANTHONY C. MANGUIAT**
Special Bids and Awards
Committee Chairman

(PDI–March 16, 22 & 28, 2005)

PSALM
POWER SECTOR
ASSETS & LIABILITIES
MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

INVITATION TO BID

The Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation ("*PSALM*") Privatization, Bids and Awards Committee ("*Committee*") invites interested parties to participate in and bid for the privatization of the following:

Bataan Thermal Plant Equipment, Components, Auxiliaries and Accessories located at Limay, Bataan

(the "*Asset*"). The Asset is being sold on an "*as is where is*" basis.

Interested parties are required to submit a Letter of Interest ("*LOI*") to PSALM which shall state the full name, address, telephone and fax number of the interested party, name of the principal contact, and signed by an authorized representative. All LOIs must be received by PSALM at the PSALM Office, 2nd Floor, SGV II Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City, not later than 5:00 p.m. on March 28, 2005 (the "*LOI Submission Deadline*"). Only interested parties that submit an LOI by the LOI Submission Deadline shall be allowed to participate further in the privatization of the Asset.

As a prerequisite to the receipt of the Bidding Package, interested parties shall execute a Confidentiality Agreement and an Undertaking pursuant to Section 78 of RA 9136, in the forms provided by PSALM, and pay a non-refundable fee in the amount of Five Hundred U.S. Dollars (U.S. $ 500.00) (the "*Participation Fee*"). The Participation Fee shall either be in cash, manager's check or cashier's check. All bank charges, if any, shall be for the account of the interested party. Only interested parties that submit the Confidentiality Agreement, Undertaking and Participation Fee to PSALM on or before 5:00 p.m. on March 29, 2005 shall be allowed to participate further in the privatization of the Asset.

The Bidding Package shall be issued during office hours (9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) from March 15, 2005 until March 29, 2005 at 5:00 p.m. (the "*Deadline*") at the PSALM Office. Only interested parties who have been issued the Bidding Package will be allowed to participate further in the privatization of the Asset.

The schedule of the bidding activities shall be as follows:

Due Diligence	:	March 22 to April 22, 2005
Pre-bid Conference	:	March 31, 2005
Deadline for Receipt of Bids by PSALM	:	April 28, 2005

A single stage two-envelope bidding system has been adopted. Other details of the privatization of the Asset are contained in the Bidding Package. References to dates and times in this notice shall be based on Manila time. Should any of the above dates fall on a holiday, the deadline shall be extended to the same time of the immediately succeeding business day in Makati City.

Interested parties will be required to post a bid security equivalent to ten percent (10%) of its total bid price in the form of an irrevocable letter of credit, confirmed by a local bank and acceptable to the Committee. The bid security of the winning bidder shall be substituted by a performance security to guarantee prompt, faithful and complete performance of its obligations under the transaction.

Letters of Interest, Confidentiality Agreements and Undertakings shall be addressed and submitted to: The Chairman, Privatization, Bids and Awards Committee, PSALM Corporation, 2nd Floor, SGV II Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City, Philippines. Inquiries and clarifications shall be addressed to Mr. Froilan A. Tampinco at the PSALM Office or at telephone number (632) 893-8202, fax number (632) 840-5341 or e-mail address fatampinco@psalm.gov.ph.

The Committee reserves the right to accept or reject any interested party or bidder or proposals or bids therefrom, or any part thereof, and/or to waive any defects contained therein and accept the offer most advantageous to the Government, without offering any reason whatsoever. It does not assume any obligation to compensate or indemnify any party for any expense or loss that they may incur as a result of their participation in the privatization process, nor does it guarantee that an award will be made. Finally, it reserves the right to modify, supplement, or change the Bidding Procedures and other aspects of the privatization process at any time, including the schedule and the venue provided herein, for any reason whatsoever and without giving prior notice. Interested parties and/or bidders will be notified subsequently of such modifications, supplements, or changes.

(Sgd.) **Vincent S. Perez Jr.**
Chairman
PSALM Privatization, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – March 15, 16 & 17, 2005)

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

P.O.Box 789 Manila, Philippines
6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City, Philippines
Tel. 632-4231; Fax No. (632) 636-2567

INVITATION to PRE-QUALIFY for PROVISION of MESSENGER SERVICES
(Contract ADB/OAS-2005/010)

1. The Asian Development Bank ("ADB"), a multilateral development finance institution headquartered in Manila, Philippines, invites experienced interested companies to apply for pre-qualification in the bidding for messenger services at ADB Headquarters at ADB Building, No. 6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City, Philippines.
2. The contractor shall provide the number of fully trained personnel, including supervisory staff, required for ADB's internal and external messenger services. The scope of services is provided in detail in the Work Performance Statement to be given to interested applicants.
3. Applications for prequalification will only be entertained from companies meeting the following criteria:
    i. Validly registered company in the Philippines, or a joint venture partnership (under joint and several liability) for at least 5 years with a trade specialization in providing internal and external messenger services;
    ii. Have at least 2 current clients and 3 previous clients, for rendering similar scope of services as described above;
    iii. Have average annual revenues of at least P3 million pesos over the past three 3 years from messenger services or other related business;
    iv. Have 1 staff supervisor to be deployed under the Contract, with at least 4 years college education and a minimum 10 years experience in messenger-related services, including document distribution in a large office environment, of which 5 years are in a supervisory capacity, who will act as the Contractor's supervisor working full time as part of the team;
    v. Have at least 20 skilled and qualified messengers to be deployed under the Contract with at least 2 years college/vocational education and a minimum of 5 years experience in messenger operation services; and at least 2 of the 20 messengers shall be licensed professional drivers, with good familiarity of Metro Manila area. All Contractor's personnel to be deployed under the Contract must be able to write and speak the English language.
4. Prequalification documents may be obtained from the Procurement and Contracts Administration Section, Institutional Services Division, Office of Administrative Services, Room 1636 South, 6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City, Philippines, from **16–22 March 2005** on any working day (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), or call 632-4231 or 632-4452; fax number (632) 636 -2567, email address: dmunoz@adb.org.
5. Invitation to bid will be issued to pre-qualified applicants who pass the minimum prequalification criteria and evaluated as pre-qualified by considering the evaluation criteria.
6. Only pre-qualified companies will be contacted and issued bidding documents. ADB reserves the right to accept or reject any application for prequalification, and to postpone issuance of bidding documents.
7. This invitation does not entail any commitment on the part of ADB, either financial or otherwise. Any cost of preparation of the application for prequalification shall be borne solely by the applicant.

Chairperson
Institutional Procurement Committee
Office of Administrative Services

Asian Development Bank
FIGHTING POVERTY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
ADB

(PDI-March 16 & 17, 2005)

Ateneo CORD

In Celebration of its 30th Anniversary Ateneo CORD

presents a very special Trendwatcher Series

The Way We Work

15 April 2005
1:30- 4:30 pm
Cultural Hall, 34th Floor
Petron Mega-Plaza
358 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City

This learning session conducted by the Ateneo Center for Organization Research and Development (CORD) will feature the launch of the book entitled 'The Way We Work". Published by the Ateneo de Manila University Press, it is a must-read for HR practitioners, managers, faculty and students in human resource management and industrial-organizational psychology. The book includes 13 articles that tackle the psychology of the Filipino worker as well as human resource management in Philippine organizations. Two articles from the book will be presented - Paradoxes of Leadership: Profile of Successful Filipino Leaders and Managing a Factory Closure: The Nestle Experience. From these presentations find out:

- *The qualities of successful Filipino leaders*
- *What Nestle did for their employees to soften the impact of closure of its Alabang Factory*

Early Bird Fee P750 (for those who pay on or before April 1). Walk-in registration fee is P1000. Fee includes snacks AND a copy of the book!

Please contact Ateneo CORD for reservations. *Mailing Address: 2/F Höffner Building, Social Development Complex, Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City 1108, Philippines Tel. Nos. (632) 426 6001 loc. 5263 / 426 5931/ 426 6282*
Fax No. (632) 426 6065• Email: ateneocord@admu.edu.ph Website: www.ateneocord.org

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NREA to hold Lent Rites

IN KEEPING with its 14-year Lenten tradition of encouraging its members to join the organization's spiritual meditation and retreat from the worldly cares, the National Real Estate Association will hold its annual Chanting of the Story of Christ's Passion on March 17-18 at the Maya Arcade Chapel, EDSA, Cubao, Quezon City.

NREA chair Nestor Mangio and President Pepe Manalad said that for nine years, this "Pabasa ng Pasyon", was traditionally held at the NREA chapel at the Gulod ng Banaba, Barangay Dolores, Porac, Pampanga coupled with the distribution of goods to the Aeta families near the said chapel.

The activity which starts with a Thanksgiving Mass at 6 p.m., followed by a Bible Study & Prayer Meeting and the formal opening of the 24-hour Chanting of the Passion, will be undertaken by NREA's Committee on Worship and Outreach Program, co-chaired by Treasurer Frank Mendoza and vice president Raphael Baylon, with members, Atty. Nene Estrada, VP Gilda Ladia, architect Joey Rivas, Coun. Mar Bacani, Marissa del Mar, Jesse Rebustillo, Celia Umali, Sol Antonio, Seth Pusung and Lina Maceda.

NREA members and friends wishing to participate may contact the Secretariat at tel. nos. 912-3492 (telefax), or 913-4463.

PASEGURUHAN NG MGA NAGLILINGKOD
SA PAMAHALAAN
(GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM)
Financial Center, Pasay City, Metro Manila 1308

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
(Reinsurance for PNOC-EDC's Fire and Allied Perils Policy)

The GSIS-General Insurance Bids and Awards Committee (GIBAC), thru its Technical Working Group (TWG) is inviting qualified local and foreign reinsurance companies/brokers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the renewal of reinsurance for the PNOC-EDC's Fire & Allied Perils Policy for a period of twelve months at May 1, 2005 at 00:01 A.M. Local Standard Time.

Combined Sum Insured : P10,752,663,375.40
Approved Budget : P 241,743,800.00

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Issuance of Eligibility and Bidding Documents	Pre-Bid Conference	Submission and Opening of Eligibility and Bid Envelopes
March 17 to 31, 2005 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM GIBAC Secretariat OSVP-GIG, 5th Floor, GSIS Bldg., Roxas Blvd. Pasay City	March 31, 2005 9:00 AM Makati Skyline Restaurant 8th Floor, GSIS Bldg., Roxas Blvd., Pasay City	April 6, 2005 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM Makati Skyline Restaurant 8th Floor, GSIS Bldg., Roxas Blvd., Pasay City

That as of bidding date, April 6, 2005, the premium quotation has support of 100% of the 50% reinsurance. The market selected by the broker for the lead reinsurer should have a minimum of "A" rating (Standard & Poor) with the rest of reinsurers having a minimum of "BB" rating as of Dec. 31, 2004, attaching copies of confirmed placement of the reinsurers share on or before the bidding date.

Eligibility and bid documents shall be issued to applicants upon filing of a Letter of Intent to Apply and payment of a non-refundable bidding fee of P10,000.00 in the form of Cash or Manager's check in favor of GSIS.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Screening, Pre-Bid Conference, Evaluation of Bid, sufficiency of Bid Security, Post-Qualification, and Award of Contract shall be governed by the provisions of existing laws, rules and regulations. Only applicants who paid bid fees shall be allowed to attend the Pre-Bid Conference and submit Bid proposals.

The GSIS thru the GIBAC reserves the right to reject any and all bids and/or part thereof, or waive any defect contained therein and may accept the offer which it deems the lowest calculated responsive bid.

March 16, 2005, Pasay City, Philippines.

(Sgd.) **ENRIQUETA P. DISUANCO**
GIBAC Chairman

(PDI – March 16 & 24, 2005)

Citibank to acquire Insular Savings for ₱1B

By Doris C. Dumlao

AMERICAN banking giant Citibank N.A. yesterday signed an agreement to buy 100 percent of Insular Savings Bank from local insurer Insular Life Assurance Co. Ltd., a deal estimated at about P1 billion.

In a press briefing, Citibank's country business manager for the global consumer group Nina Aguas said the financial closing of the transaction was expected by May.

Citibank officials declined to disclose the value of the deal, but banking sources said it was worth about P1 billion—a premium over Insular Savings Bank's net worth of P860 million.

Citibank will gain 36 branches in key areas nationwide following the acquisition, bringing its total number of retail bank branches in the country to 42.

Aguas said the newly acquired savings bank would be kept as a separate entity and renamed Citibank Savings.

Citibank CEO for Asia Pacific Ashok Vaswani said: "This transaction is an exciting opportunity to expand our services to meet the needs of customers in the Philippines and is an important part of our Asian growth plan. We look forward to expanding our presence in a country, which has always been a source of high quality innovation and talent for Citibank."

Citigroup Inc., parent company of Citibank, N.A., has been in the Philippines for more than 100 years and is the largest foreign bank, with a strong presence in corporate and investment banking, consumer banking and private banking.

Insular Life president Mayo Ongsingco said: "We believe our bank customers will welcome the news as they can be assured of receiving the highest quality of banking service and attention from Citibank."

The insurer's divestment was in line with its corporate strategy of focusing on insurance, which is its core business competence.

"This transaction gives us the opportunity to now focus our energies on what we do best. We have a leadership role in the life insurance industry and there are many opportunities in our current economy to fortify our position and to expand our coverage of our markets," said Insular Life chair Vicente Ayllon.

Seller Insular Life is the first and largest Filipino life insurance company with total assets of P37.8 billion.

Citibank acquired Insular on the last day that foreign banks were allowed to fully own thrift banks, as provided under the Thrift Bank Act.

British bank HSBC Ltd. acquired PCI Savings Bank from Equitable PCI Bank in 2000 to widen its customer outreach. American Express Bank also bought a local thrift bank for the expansion of its credit card business.

Insular Savings attracted the interest of the American banking giant because of its good balance sheet, diversified consumer portfolio, strategic branch locations and wide array of banking licenses.

Aside from its basic thrift bank license, Insular Savings has trust banking, foreign currency deposit unit, quasi-banking and government securities dealer licenses. It has also been a consistently profitable bank.

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* Tiered according to loan amount. Terms and conditions apply. See fliers for details. Promo Period: March 1 to June 30, 2005. Promo valid only in Metro Manila; Meycauayan, Bulacan; Cavite and Calamba, Laguna.

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0973 Series of 2005.

LandBank to further cut down bad loans

By Christine A. Gaylican

STATE-OWNED Land Bank of the Philippines hopes to further cut down its non-performing loans (NPL) to 9 percent this year as it eyes a second sale of its bad loans through the special purpose asset vehicle (SPAV) system.

Margarito Teves, LandBank president and CEO, told reporters that the bank could bring down its NPL ratio which was seen to improve to 12.2 percent as of January.

From a high of P22.7 billion in 2003, LandBank has lowered the bad loans to P13.4 billion last year.

This is below the industry average of 13 percent, Teves noted.

He added that the bank would beat the April deadline to make use of incentives in disposing of bad loans.

The bank's bad loans ratio could drop even further through a competitive auction of pools of bad assets involving two investors—Deutsche Bank-Cargill Financial Services International Inc. and J.P. Morgan.

The bank intends to dispose P10 billion more worth of bad loans this first quarter, Teves said.

Last year, LandBank created three special purpose vehicles (SPVs) for unloading at least P17 billion worth of non-performing assets in October.

With multiple SPVs, LandBank and its financial adviser, Ernst & Young, may choose to sell the assets in tranches.

BSP to retain partial forex restrictions

WHILE ready to ease currency trading rules, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said it still wanted to keep some restrictions in line with efforts to curb money laundering.

BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. told reporters Monday night that the planned liberalization of the banks' overbought limit—now set at 2.5 percent of a bank's free capital or $5 million, whichever is lower—was now in the works.

The overbought limit refers to the amount of US dollars that banks are allowed to keep.

Prior to the 1997 Asian currency turmoil, banks were allowed to keep dollars equivalent to as much as 25 percent of banks' unimpaired capital.

The limit was drastically lowered when the crisis erupted, in an attempt to curb speculative attacks against the local currency.

Tetangco acknowledged that liquidity in the Philippine Dealing System, the spot foreign exchange market, had now improved, with daily value turnover hitting $300 to $400 million from an average of only $200 million in the past years, which could justify increasing the limit.

Tetangco said, however, that the BSP was not keen on a proposal from banks to increase the amount of dollars that retail clients could buy over the counter without documentation, from the current $5,000 per 15 days.

Tetangco said the OTC restriction was still necessary to curb money laundering, a practice where money from criminal activities is transacted through the banks and financial institutions to make it appear to have originated from legitimate sources.

"It (removal of OTC limit) would be difficult. In fact, we're asking the money changers and authorized foreign exchange dealers to register now and then submit reports to us," he said.

He also said the BSP would likely retain the rules on derivatives licensing, despite some recommendations to ease the requirements so that more banks could engage in derivatives trading. *Doris C. Dumlao*

INNOVA

HI-LUX

RP car parts industry part of 'IMV' global strategy

By Tessa R. Salazar

SYDNEY, Australia—How do you build products faster than the speed of global demand? How can you satisfy the diverse needs of different markets, and not end up diluting your brand's stamp of quality?

For aspiring global marketers, take a lesson or two from the much-harped-about "Toyota Way," the giant car manufacturer's global strategy to catch up to its growing number of customers all over the world.

And it's not just a strategy to be a global supplier of cars. It's the strategy of strategies—the path to overtake the biggest carmaker in the world—General Motors—in two years.

But that's just the news media speaking way too much ahead. If you ask Toyota executives now, they'd rather be known as having the most favorite brand across all vehicle ranges and across all races.

"One thing we are very concerned about is when companies get big, we could get the 'big enterprise syndrome,' and communications suffer," said Shigeru Takayanagi, senior vice president for Toyota Motor Asia Pacific Pte Ltd.

Over 140 countries

It's hard to think otherwise. Toyota executives now claim they sell vehicles in more countries than do Starbucks Coffee and McDonald's. The Toyota logo is seen in over 140 countries.

With such a potent "omnipresence" across the globe, what's next for Toyota? Make the motoring view for tomorrow more exciting, perhaps, with some redesigns and new engines to power them.

In a press conference held in Sydney March 11 attended by motoring media from Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia, Toyota unveiled its project "for the 21 century": the IMV or International Multipurpose Vehicle project.

4 key areas

Toyota engineers say that IMV development is incorporated in four key areas of making multipurpose vehicles: a global package, advanced design, newly designed frames and suspension and high-performance engines.

"In order to achieve these goals, the mission our engineers faced was to develop totally new multipurpose vehicles for the 21st century and establish a new world standard," said Yoshio Shirai, managing officer of Toyota Motor Corp.

"IMV you," Ardy Lopez (of AutoExtreme) seems to tell Vince Socco, general manager of Toyota Motor Asia Pacific.

Apart from the press conference, the Asean motoring media had an on- and off-road drive in the Gold Coast. This was the first time anywhere that a test drive for many Toyota vehicles had been conducted.

Toyota executives considered Australia as the ideal setting for driving its multipurpose vehicles. The largest subcontinent in the world features topographies and climates of varying degrees. As such, Toyota said Australia perfectly embodied the spirit of adventure for IMVs.

Exciting project

So exciting has been the IMV project that it recently got featured in the Discovery Channel via 9 3-minute documentary segments. When executed right in any country, IMV would be the unprecedented vehicle project for Toyota.

The project involves the parts industries of all countries involved. Toyota vehicles would be made almost entirely outside Japan. Yet, the purchasing, manufacturing and logistics processes would be conducted with the same Japan headquarters precision no matter where they are being done in the world.

The "Toyota" method would effectively be replicated through constant practice in production and discipline.

Toyota executives also revealed their ultimate goal: the production of IMV models is to procure nearly 100 percent of vehicle components from sources outside Japan. With its long manufacturing experience in areas where it is establishing IMV production bases, the carmaker believes that it can maintain its "high-quality standards."

Toyota's global manufacturing history, though, followed a natural progression. The first stage involved merely exporting Japan-made vehicles. Then local manufacturing in key market areas followed. Now, with international trade liberalization favoring the "evolutionary next step," the production and supply systems are ready to be conducted on a global scale.

Affordable cars

Ultimately, Toyota executives say that the IMV project would make available affordable cars to its customers worldwide, and simultaneously at that.

As Toyota redesigns its manufacturing processes on a global scale, it continues doing what it does best. Perhaps signaling the initial fruits of the IMV project, Toyota has developed new gasoline and diesel-powered vehicles. The diesel engine features a clean common rail fuel injection technology. Its exteriors feature bold impressions of enduring appeal. Executive chief engineer Kaoru Hosokawa, in a prepared statement, described the vehicles as meeting the 21st century customer demands for high levels of durability, safety and spacious comfort.

An IMV's main purpose would be to maintain reliable performance under a wide range of conditions, including unpaved surfaces and flooded roads.

An IMV's design would rely heavily on dealers and customers' feedback from around the world. It would be safe to assume that a lot of debate and discussions would circulate among members of the design and engineering teams.

The IMV project officially started in Thailand in August 2004. This global project would develop new trucks, sport utility vehicles and other multipurpose vehicles for introduction in 140 countries.

The Toyota Hi-Lux and Innova, which are now seen roaming Philippine roads, are part of the IMV series.

Toyota began exporting its Hi-Lux pickup trucks from Thailand and Innova from Indonesia in November 2004. This year, Toyota is set to introduce an SUV to the Philippines.

Car parts made in RP

Toyota has designated the Philippines a major global supplier of its automotive products. Its exports hit $384M in 2004, 23 percent of total automotive exports.

As an example, Takayanagi told the INQUIRER that Toyota had ordered wiring harnesses from Yazaki-Torres, at a volume of 1,500 units a month, for its Innova vehicle being assembled at its Sta. Rosa plant.

The windshields and windows of Innova, Corolla and Camry are also being sourced from Filipino-owned Asahi glass.

Takanayagi said Toyota has tapped 56 car parts makers in the Philippines and it plans to increase that number with its IMV project.

Toyota pays additional five percent in duties when it has to import parts.

Takanayagi said that apart from parts making, Filipino technicians are excelling at Toyota plants in different parts of the world.

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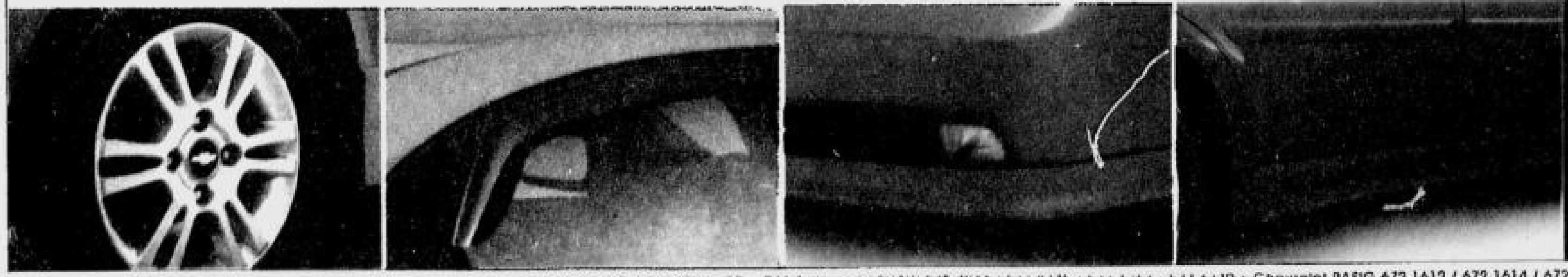
*Based on 50% down payment for 72 months for Optra 1.8LT Limited Edition.

PROMO PERIOD: February 5 to March 31, 2005 Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0605 Series of 2005.



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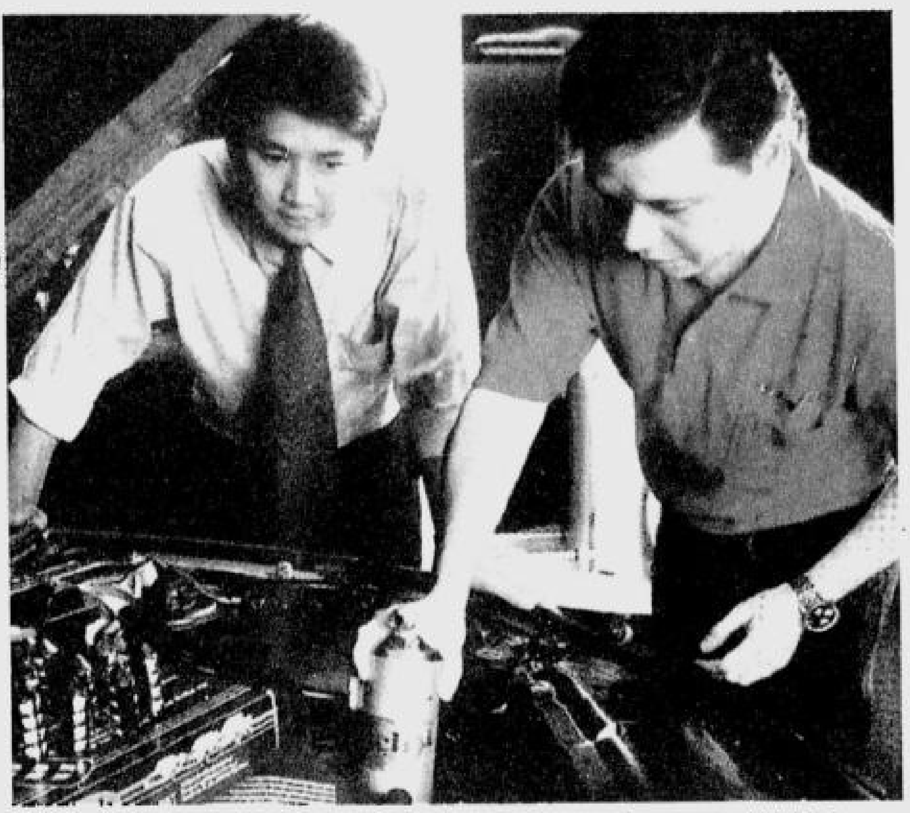
Breakthrough device promises fuel savings, better engine efficiency



INSTALLATION of the in-line type may require the assistance of an expert, which Davies Energy Systems provides.

By Charles E. Buban

ALL fuels have elements that cause ignition problems—some burn too fast causing premature ignition of the fuel/air mixture (called preignition) while some burn too slowly causing delayed ignition, excessive smoke and carbon buildup.

A number of products were launched in the market in the hope of controlling these troublemakers.

The idea is to be able to act on both of these problem fuel components to ensure that they burn with the same efficiency as the rest of the fuel.

"But while a good number of products seem to be ineffective or fail to give convincing results, very few provide fuel savings, emissions reduction and increased engine power," reveals Davies Energy Systems president Shrikanth Bhat.

Advanced technology

In distributing Fitch Fuel Catalyst in the Philippine market, Bhat says Filipino motorists now have the chance to use one of the world's most advanced technology.

"Fitch Fuel Catalyst is a revolutionary piece of technology that simply and easily improves the efficiency of fuel combustion in any size of vehicle, gasoline or diesel," he explains.

The Fitch Fuel Catalyst, a patented combination of different metals, is a precombustion fuel treatment device that aims to improve combustion.

"It is not an additive (unlike what are mostly sold here) as it puts nothing into the fuel. Instead, it causes a reaction and yet the device is not consumed or affected in the process," clarifies Bhat.

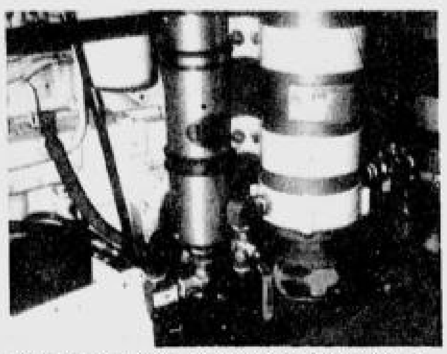
True catalyst

This makes the Fitch Fuel Catalyst a true catalyst by definition [a catalyst is not consumed in the reaction it promotes] since it only causes a chemical change in the fuel it comes in contact with while not becoming a part of the fuel by adding any element of itself during or after the reaction.

The device is installed in the fuel line (for the in-line type) of any engine just like a fuel filter.

Bhat explains that the device is maintenance-free, lasting for up to 400,000 kilometers, "which is essentially, the life of the engine," says Bhat.

The in-line type is better suited to diesel engines as their flow rate is more easily established than some gasoline engines.



FITCH Fuel Catalyst comes in different sizes and can be applied to almost all types of engines that use gasoline and diesel.

Drop-in type

Another type is the drop-in Fitch Fuel Catalysts, which is composed of pellets packed into clusters.

Bhat explains that about six or eight of these devices are dropped into the fuel tank (price ranges from P8,500 to P11,300 a package) and will constantly work on the fuel while they stay in the tank.

"This type is much easier to fit (compared to the in-line) and do not require a mechanic. Much more the device is not affected by the rate of fuel flow and therefore works more effectively on gasoline engines," says Bhat.

But whatever the type, both promise to provide from 5 to 12 percent fuel savings, reduced emissions and increased horsepower.

A relatively new player in the market, Davies Energy Systems initially distributes Fitch Fuel Catalysts products from their Jardine Davies building headquarters on Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City. Some participating stores, like True Value, also carry the catalyst product.

Fitch
FUEL CATALYST
IMPROVES:
ELIMINATES:

BOTH in-line (larger copper-colored cylinder) and in-tank types of devices promise to provide from 5 to 12 percent fuel savings.

Rerefining fuel

Tests conducted by several leading laboratories in the United States (including the Environmental Protection Agency) and Australia have confirmed that the Fitch Fuel Catalyst is actually rerefining the fuel immediately prior to combustion.

"This is accomplished through a complex chemical reaction, which breaks the long chain hydrocarbons in the fuel and converts them to smaller, higher energy, and therefore more combustible constituents. As a result, the fuel burns more efficiently," reveals Davies Energy Systems VP John Alcordo.

In a recent testing to update its California Air Resource Board and EPA certifications, the device was even recommended to engine builders and manufacturers attempting to achieve maximum fuel economy and lowest emission signature.

Testers declared that in addition to altering the fuel air ratio, altering ignition timing may also help optimize the benefits derived from the presence of the Fitch Fuel Catalyst.

Proof of quality

As proof of its quality, Alcordo says the Fitch Fuel catalyst has a 90-day money-back guarantee provided the installation instructions were followed and the return of the product is based either on the defect or dissatisfaction with its performance.

"So far no one has returned our products and in fact, reported fuel savings beyond what we have promised them," reports Alcordo.

Made in the US

The Fitch Fuel Catalyst is manufactured by Advanced Power Systems International (based in North Carolina), a company founded by veteran racing driver and Corvette Hall of Fame inductee John Cooper Fitch.

"As a developer of alternative products, the device was developed and has been used for more than 10 years," reveals Alcordo.

The Advanced Power Systems International's products, particularly the catalyst, is now a widely recognized device used in the heavy-duty trucking industry, in the marine market and in power sports vehicles.

Bravo to Ford; zeroing in on Sportivo, IMVs

FULL TANK
Al Mendoza

IF ALL car companies were like Ford, this country could be "safe" again.

I say this in the wake of Ford's recent announcement that it was voluntarily issuing a field service action to address issues concerning the speed control switch in four- to five-year-old 2000 model year Ford F-150s, Ford Expeditions and Lincoln Navigators, as well as 2001 F-Series Supercrew trucks manufactured during the same time period as the other 2000 model year vehicles.

Said Ford: "Ford has been working closely with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to investigate this issue."

In the Philippines, around 2,000 vehicles of 2000 model year Ford Expeditions and F-150s and 2001 model year Ford F-150 Supercrews equipped with speed control have been identified to be included in this field service action program.

Said Ford: "The speed control switch may malfunction, creating the potential for overheating, smoke and in extreme cases, may possibly result in fire."

It said Ford would replace the speed control switch at no cost to customers. Owners of affected vehicles will be notified in writing immediately. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has likewise been informed of this field service action.

"Customers may also contact their respective Ford dealer customer relations officers or Ford Philippines customer relations office at 049-541-5000," Ford said.

Well, what can I say?

Bravo to Ford!

* * *

NLEX NOTES. Definitely, with the addition of 138 new lane kilometers at the Northern Luzon Expressway, traffic congestion there has been drastically decreased at practically all hours of the day. The P20-billion investment to improve the NLEX is now reaping the fruits of a job well done: A virtually hassle-free ride from end to end. As I said, I don't mind paying that much at the tollbooth in exchange for quality. I keep repeating myself here but I don't mind: Quality is always expensive. You dispute that and you don't really know the difference between a Kia and an Innova.

* * *

Here is good news to diesel lovers.

The Sportivo "Drive to Thrill" program is still on and will go on until May 8.

The handsome program will give all test drivers of Sportivo a token prize and an entry coupon for a chance to win a 21" JVC TV (with rack) every month within the duration of the test-drive program.

Isuzu has impressed its buyers with Sportivo's rear combination lamp and the sporty six-hole design radiator grille.

Other outstanding highlights include a trendy two-piece bumper and an eye-catching 15-inch new design alloy wheel.

The Sportivo has a flex ride suspension system, guaranteeing a smooth ride without sacrificing stability and safety.

In addition, the Sportivo brings the motorist closer to the SUV experience with the twin bucket seats for the driver and passengers of the first and second row, not to mention the lever-type handbrake handle, center console with integrated cupholders, DVD and front-facing third row seat.

* * *

Unknown to many, Toyota's IMV (Innovative International Multipurpose Vehicles) project began in 2002. Today, its launch is almost complete. The Hilux, Innova and HiAce are now in the market.

People have been falling in line to have a grab of any one of them.

Toyota has even gone global (again) in showing Filipino motoring journalists what it's got as some 10 colleagues of mine were flown to Australia (March 11-14) to sample Toyota's fleet of newly released IMV vehicles, thanks to the combined efforts of Toyota hot shots Vince Socco, Danny Isla and Ariel de Jesus.

In Thailand, the Hilux, called Vigo there, was the first of five newly developed IMV project models designed for sale in more than 140 countries.

The new Toyota lineup to be unfurled in Thailand consists of three pickup trucks of different body types—a minivan and an SUV, collectively known as IMVs.

The IMV project represents an unprecedented approach under a "Made by Toyota" banner that draws fully on the resources and potential of outside-Japan global production and supply bases for both vehicles and components.

Production of the new IMVs has coincided with Toyota's four main production bases in Thailand, Indonesia, Argentina and South Africa, which will supply vehicles to countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, Oceania, Latin America and the Middle East.

This includes the production of such major components as diesel engines in Thailand, gasoline engines in Indonesia and manual transmissions in India and their supply to the countries charged with vehicle production.

Said Raymond Rodriguez of Toyota Motors Philippines: "The globalization of TMC's business activities was initially centered on producing in Japan and exporting abroad. This was gradually followed by efforts to build where sold. But as free-trade agreements become more common in various parts of the world, TMC, by establishing production and supply structures made more efficient by their global scale, aims to be able to offer more attractive and more affordable products to its customers worldwide and at the same time."

Toyota expects to produce half a million units by 2006, allowing Toyota to contribute further to the development of the automotive industry and economy of each country involved.

* * *

QUOTE ME. Summer is almost here and the boiling point season could trigger hot heads again. Love your heart, if not yourself. Be cool:

If the North Luzon Expressway is OK now, why not the South?

By Vicente B. Foz
Contributor

A NEW and modern North Luzon Expressway (NLEX), especially offering widened lanes from the critical route of Balintawak, Quezon City, up to Bulacan being traversed by some 2,000 vehicles every day, has been completed after about two years of reconstruction.

Amazed and satisfied motorists—even those complaining about increased toll rates—now enjoy safe, smooth and faster travel even up to the highway's final exit in Sta. Ines, Pampanga.

In contrast, hundreds of motorists and truckers still plod through an ancient South Luzon Expressway (SLEX) every day. Its narrow pathways continue to clog traffic flow and delay daily trips.

In the backburner

So, if the North is okay now, why not the South? Not a few SLEX motorists begin to wonder. Why are real improvements not being done on the Alabang-Calamba route? And what about the much ballyhooed extension from Calamba to Sto. Tomas, Batangas, all the way to Lucena City, Quezon? The projects have been in the backburner for a full decade now.

The Philippine National Construction Corp. (PNCC), the SLEX franchisee, should have completed the toll road projects way back in the 1990s. This major toll road artery is quite crucial to sustaining the development of commerce and industry in the vital economic zones of the Cavite-Laguna-Batangas-Rizal-Quezon (Calabarzon) region.

In early 1995, PNCC started talking with Hong Kong's toll road big shot Gordon Wu for a PNCC-Hopewell partnership to undertake the important SLEX projects. Later suffering financial setbacks, Hopewell allowed Crown Equities Inc. to come in, resulting in a joint-venture company called Hopewell Crown Infrastructure Inc. (HCH) where Crown Equities has the controlling interest.

Thus, nine years ago, PNCC and Hopewell Crown forged a joint-venture agreement. But project implementation was delayed as Crown Equities sold its controlling share, 60 percent of its 90 percent HCH shares, to Northeast Development Acquisition Corp. (NDAC). The latter, however, was reportedly unable to meet the terms of their agreement.

Quezon City
Manila
Rizal
Makati City
Alabang
Muntinlupa City
San Pedro
Cavite
Carmona
Sta. Rosa
Laguna
Calamba City

Still trying to make good on its joint-venture agreement with PNCC, HCH got a new investor, Malaysian MTD Capital which, it said, had a combined capital and assets base of US$920 million. But taking in a new partner was reportedly not acceptable to PNCC as "the color" of the new investor's money had to be shown first. On the other hand, HCH claimed the new partners would do so after a supplemental toll operation agreement with the government was signed.

$10-B rehab

Last month, PNCC announced to the media that it has terminated its agreement with HCH and started talking with two other groups—one American and the other Chinese. Without identifying the two groups, PNCC said they have the capability to finance the P10-billion rehabilitation of SLEX. With a new round of discussions and negotiations, it will take months, even years, for agreements to take off—if the parties ever agree at all.

The estimated cost of rehabilitating the Alabang-Calamba stretch of SLEX and extending it from Calamba to Sto. Tomas has now reached P10 billion, according to a Philippine Daily Inquirer report. Extending the SLEX's improvement to cover the 88-kilometer Calamba-Lucena City route would cost another US$480 million, according to Business World. Indecision and further delay would only push project costs to balloon further and future toll rates "heaven-high," inflicting more burdens on motorists.

Expiring in 2 years

Now, can PNCC be expected to do anything much about the project? On May 1, 2007, or in two years, its franchise will expire. Is it still really interested in complying with its mandate under its franchise?

In view of the neglect of the general condition of the expressway and its nonextension to Sto. Tomas as mandated under the PNCC franchise, more economic setbacks are expected. Sustained development of the Calabarzon sector will be set back and numerous industrial locators will be turned off. The impact is also being felt in other Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) projects like the completion of the Southern Tagalog Arterial Road (STAR) Tollway where investor interest seems to have dimmed.

The vital issues: for the country's economic well-being and the best public interest, shouldn't the PNCC franchise be cancelled or be allowed to expire? Since PNCC has failed to begin undertaking the toll road projects for a long time, shouldn't the government offer the projects to interested private proponents in a public bidding and allow Congress to grant a new franchise to the most qualified and winning bid proponents?

BMW's fun-to-drive one

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

BAYERISCHE Motoren Werke, better known as BMW, assigns numbers to its cars instead of names. Thus, BMW has the 3 Series, the 5 Series, the 6 Series and the 7 Series. The 1.6-liter, manual transmission 316i compact sedan was considered BMW's entry-level model until BMW unveiled the 1 Series.

BMW's newest offering is aptly named—or should we say numbered—because it aims to become No. 1 in the premium sport compact market. A low-slung, truncated-looking five-door hatchback, the 1 Series packs all the goodies that car buffs have come to expect from BMW, such as a potent high-performance engine, an agile sport suspension, rear-wheel drive, a smooth six-speed automatic transmission with Steptronic and high-quality interior esthetics.

Built on an entirely new platform, the One is not a mere hatchback rehash of the 3 Series. Although the gasoline-fed 120i Executive I test-drove is powered by the a derivative of the 2.0-liter, four cylinders-in-line, 16-valve DOHC engine of the 3 Series, it was upgraded by 7 bhp with balancer shafts, Valvetronic and double Varos. The 120i delivers 150 bhp at 6,200 rpm and 148 lb-ft max torque at 3,600 rpm.

Crisp handling

The One's crisp handling and awesome poise, especially when caroming around corners at high speed, can be traced to its 50/50 weight distribution, wide track (wider than the 3 Series), long wheelbase, short overhangs, a wheel-at-every-corner configuration, a drag coefficient of 0.31 and, of course, BMW's patented dynamic stability and traction control technology.

Even when driving the One at 200 km/hr on the traffic-free straightaway, you don't get the fear of flying out of control as the power-assisted steering provides adequate weight and feel of the road. The ride is firm, not cushiony, which is to be expected of a sport compact.

The front suspension uses McPherson struts with aluminum alloy tubes to reduce weight while the rear has a five-link independent arrangement. To achieve the One's 50:50 weight distribution, the battery was placed low at the rear of the trunk and the engine was mounted far back in the chassis. The trunk is unencumbered by the presence of a spare tire since 16-inch run-flat tires are standard equipment.

Ventilated disc brakes up front and solid discs at the rear with ABS and Electronic Brake Force Distribution assure you of more than adequate stopping power. A neat turning circle of 10.7 meters makes the One easy to maneuver and park in tight spots.

Eye candy

The radical, chiseled and blunt body styling of the One may not be eye candy to everyone, but at least it appears bolder and more vigorous than the bland-looking 316i compact sedan. BMW obviously designed the 1 Series to appeal to the younger generation of car enthusiasts, especially the boy racer types. When you slide into the driver's seat, you immediately get the feeling that you are about to drive a sports car because of the extraordinarily low driving position straight behind the steering wheel.

The sports car feeling increases as you insert the 7 Series-style key into its slot, push it in to activate the car's systems and then push the separate Start/Stop button on the dashboard to ignite the engine. Then you succumb to the temptation to step on the floor-hinged accelerator pedal just to hear the deep, distinctive growl that can only come from a BMW engine.

Does this 120i sprint from zero to 100 km/hr in 9.2 seconds as its Munich manufacturer claims? Better not try to check that out, nor the vaunted top speed of 217 km/hr until you reach a long stretch of pavement entirely devoid of traffic in the countryside.

Meanwhile, you familiarize yourself with the switches and instrumentation. You can easily read the speedometer and rev counter dials located in the main binnacle behind the small, three-spoke sport steering wheel which, like the driver's seat, can be adjusted. The major switches and controls are found in the center console, on and around the steering wheel and the door armrests. The layout, in short, is logical and practical with aluminum cappings replacing the wood trim usually found in bigger BMW cars.

Hatch

Since the One is a hatchback, seating space at the rear is a bit tight for two adult passengers and the trunk is limited to a 300-liter capacity. However, that capacity is more than enough for grocery bags and it can be increased to 1,100 liters when the rear seat is folded down.

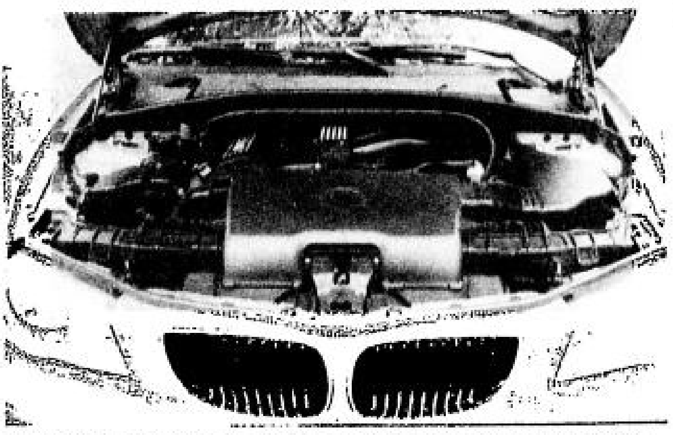
Because the 120i weighs a hefty 1,335 kg unloaded, some may feel that its 150 bhp engine is not powerful enough. If so, you'll have to convince BMW Philippines to bring in the 120d whose second-generation turbocharged common rail direct injection diesel engine develops 163 bhp at 4,000 rpm and 251 lb-ft max torque at 2,000 rpm. Or hope that Munich comes up with an M variant very soon.

The silver 120i Executive I test-drove is priced at P1.995 million while the top-of-the-line 120i Sport goes for P2.070 million. If those prices are too high, consider the 116i (P1.595 million) and the 118i Executive (1.890 million)—not as fast, perhaps, as the 120i, but still fun to drive.

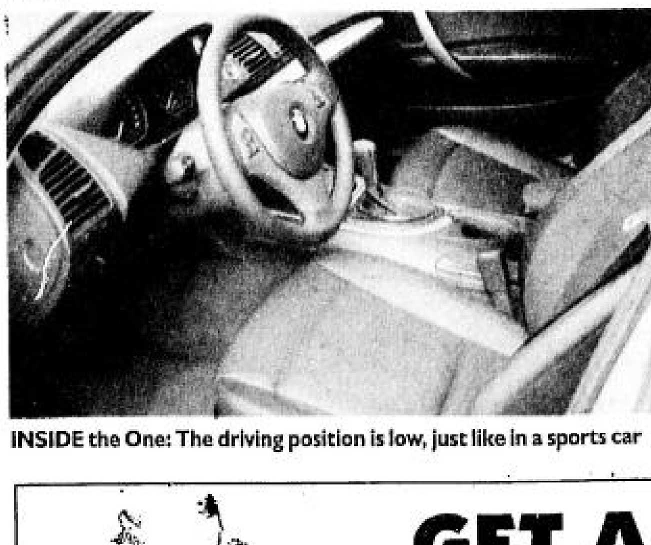
* * *

E-mail comments to asevilla@inquirer.com.ph.

THE BMW 1 series: Radical, chiseled exterior, but unmistakably fun to drive



THE 120i's 2.0-liter engine: Balancer shafts, Valvetronic and double Varos



INSIDE the One: The driving position is low, just like in a sports car

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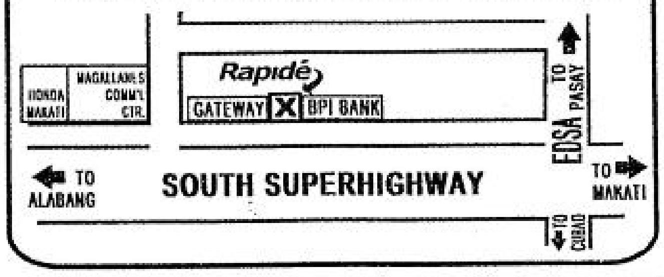

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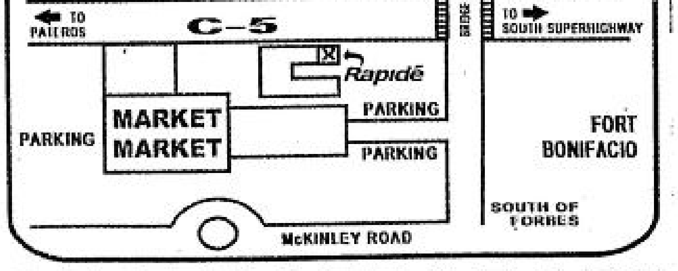

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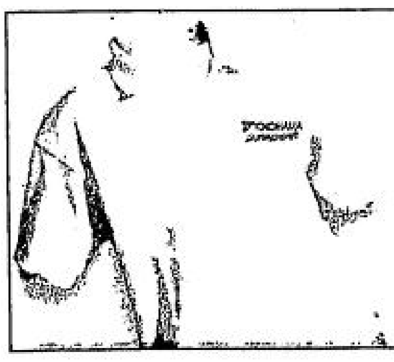

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Through the looking glass

CATCH MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

IT IS great, once in a while, to daydream about the ideal. Spending time thinking about the what-ifs often leads to a clearer picture of our idyllic wants and the spans that we have to cover to get to that state. It is rarer still to actually get to experience something we only hope is true.

A recent trip to the North, Subic Bay in particular, allowed me to step through "the looking glass" and to experience a drive that was fluctuating, at the same time, between abysmal and ideal.

We have to start any Manila-based road trip with the chaos that is Manila traffic. Thursday is about as normal a traffic day in the Manila work week as any and noon would surely be a great time to take off, as most of the motoring public would probably be tucking into their meals.

It sounded like a plan, and would almost assuredly allow transit from the Mantrade Interchange on Edsa to the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) tollbooths in less than an hour. In the Greek tragedy that is the Manila bottleneck, the traffic gods, envious that a mere mortal would want to defy their power by traveling, delay-free, across the span of the metropolis, decided to doom the plan from the beginning.

In an excruciating hour and change, under a withering summer noon sun, stalled delivery vans and weaving buses (both probably agents of the traffic gods) conspired to stop me dead in my tracks.

Merge ramp

My cynicism and complaints came to a crescendo as I approached the entrance of the NLEX on Edsa, sometime after the Muñoz market. For a highway that is supposed to be the thoroughfare to the vast expanses of North Luzon,. the only damned sign for the merge ramp is a small, unremarkable and deficient one that says, "Baguio."

Fine, I mean I know where to turn on Edsa to get to the NLEX. This is a small ramp that I've been using for 20 years on every northern trip I have made and still miss it once in a while. So, why is that infernal exit so hidden and only marked with a sign whose size would only usually indicate the direction to the next city or next municipality?

Higher toll for better roads

Precariously merging onto the stream of buses and cars headed north, I was in for a pleasant surprise. Fifteen seconds on the NLEX and one immediately notices the excellent road surface. The surface is so good that it made me forget the money that I paid to get onto the NLEX and the money I would again eventually have to pay at the exit.

Traffic flowed at 110-kph to 120-kph clip, only slowing for old cars that could not cope with the beautiful driving surface or drivers who would not deal with the higher rate of travel. In less than an hour, drivers can find themselves at the San Fernando exit, where many will probably debate the value of their toll payments.

I think it to be value for my money and will gladly pay a higher toll for better roads and their improved maintenance. Many I have talked to, though, regarding the higher NLEX tolls, consider it to be a true form of "highway robbery" and despite the improved service, are aghast at the toll prices.

The traffic situation in San Fernando proper is well managed enough, with a vehicular overpass that, though steep and narrow, allows transient traffic through the area to flow at a decent rate. The driving nightmare begins again when one leaves the city and begins the trek on the lahar-filled plains and dry riverbeds of Pampanga.

Kings of the road

In a two-lane provincial highway that serves to connect the NLEX to the port of Subic Bay, it is sad that tricycles are kings of the road. I do not know if their drivers and operators are intentionally out to drive the motoring public crazy, but it seems this is the case.

In the dozen or so small towns on the way to the entrance of the Subic highway, a lot of tricycles do not only swarm like flies at intersections, jockeying for pole position at the prospect of getting a hole shot at the next green light. Once out on the open road, however, they accelerate slowly to 40 kph and stay at that speed, creating dozen car processions waiting for the opportunity to overtake.

The typical tricycle driver positions himself and his side car racer in the middle of the road, impervious to appeals by motorists, both courteous and otherwise, to move aside and allow a few feet of overtaking space.

They are a brave lot, these trike drivers, as they are unflinching even in the face of loaded buses and rampaging oversized jeepneys. Only once did I see a tricycle scurry for the security of the road shoulder. It took a fully loaded dump truck and its air horn to convince the driver of his mortality, while I, on the other hand, immediately scampered at the sight and sound of "smaller" two-ton SUVs.

Disciplined driving

After an hour and a half dogfight through Pampanga and Zambales, the outlying hills of Olongapo give way to the entrance to the Subic Highway. The transition from tricycle bedlam to the disciplined driving style inside the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) is one of the most surreal I have experienced in the world. All of a sudden, there are speed limits to abide by and stop signs that must be followed.

At intersections where there are no traffic lights, people give right of way. Traffic officers are polite and professional. The road system is second to none in the Philippines when there is budget for maintenance. For a facility that was abandoned by the US 7th Fleet more than a decade ago, it is strange that the legacy of disciplined driving is something that has stuck around.

Bittersweet

It would be easy and cliché to say that the drive to Subic was bittersweet; both with the elements of good driving conditions rivaling developed nations and the third world cacophony that reminds us of our economic deprivation. Sadly, to me it was just astringent. The contrasts of the trip only make the problems of driving in the Philippines starker.

The age-old and overused adages of discipline, driver education and road safety are relevant in this case, but sadly lack any sort of editorial bite. I think it is simply that we, as a motoring nation, are not trying hard enough to improve. As proven by the examples of the NLEX and the SBMA driving experience, local efforts do often produce public benefit, albeit in varying degrees. I hate to say it but it seems that the rest of us are just being our usual selves—lazy and complacent.

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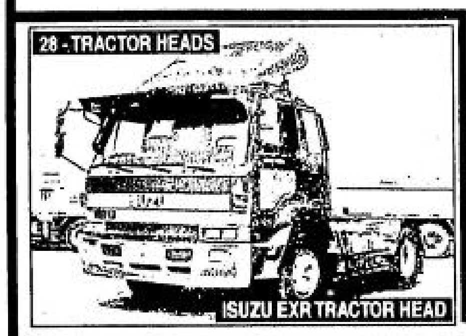
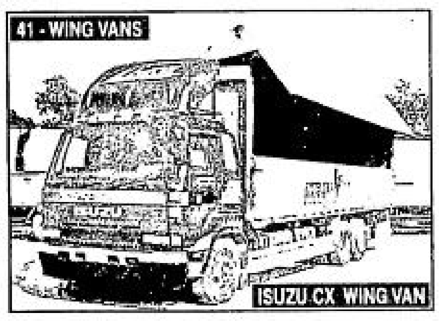
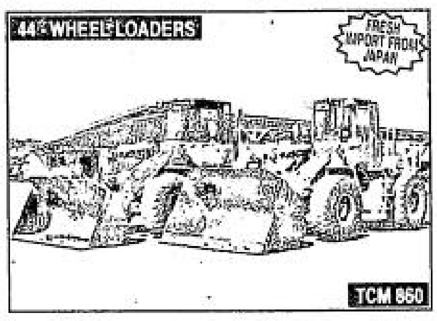


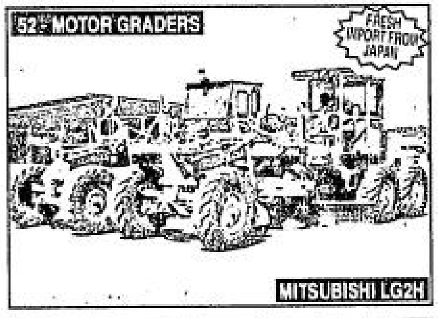
28 - TRACTOR HEADS
ISUZU EXR TRACTOR HEAD



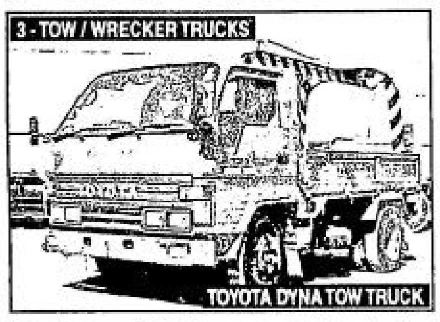
41 - WING VANS
ISUZU CX WING VAN



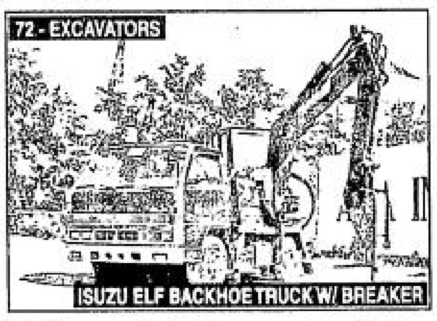
44 - WHEEL LOADERS
FRESH IMPORT FROM JAPAN
TCM 860



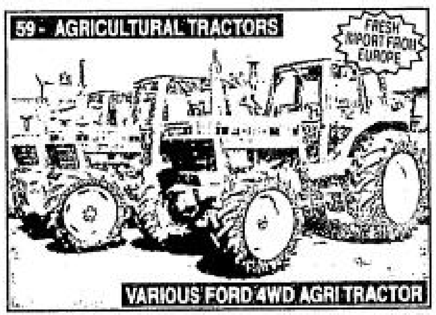
52 - MOTOR GRADERS
FRESH IMPORT FROM JAPAN
MITSUBISHI LG2H



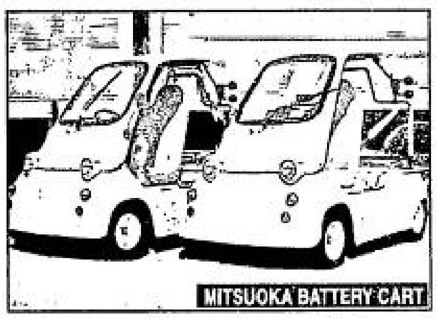
3 - TOW / WRECKER TRUCKS
TOYOTA DYNA TOW TRUCK



72 - EXCAVATORS
ISUZU ELF BACKHOE TRUCK W/ BREAKER



59 - AGRICULTURAL TRACTORS
FRESH IMPORT FROM EUROPE
VARIOUS FORD 4WD AGRI TRACTOR



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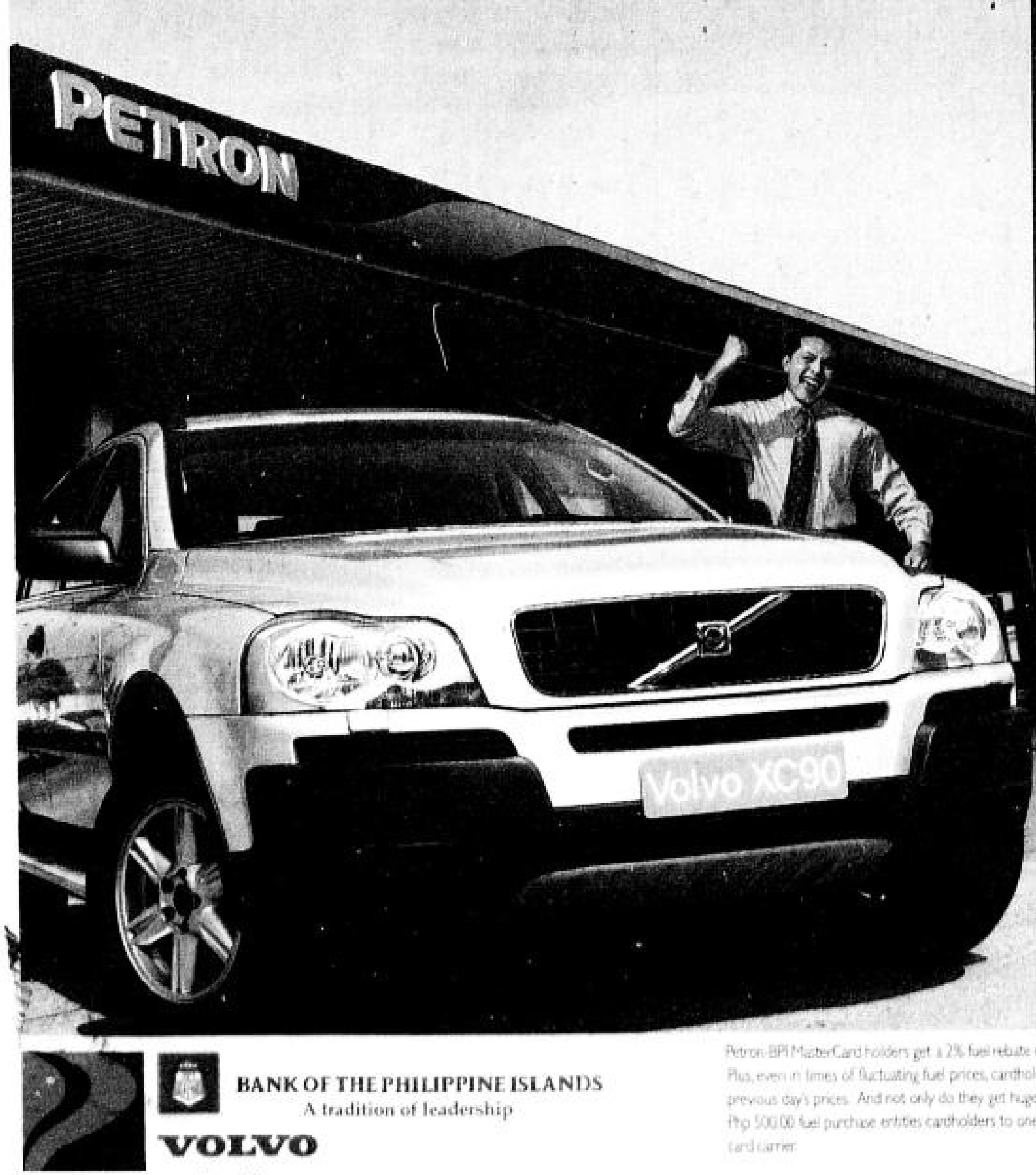

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MARTIN O REYES

Through the looking glass

CATCH MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

IT IS great, once in a while, to daydream about the ideal. Spending time thinking about the what-ifs often leads to a clearer picture of our idyllic wants and the spans that we have to cover to get to that state. It is rarer still to actually get to experience something we only hope is true.

A recent trip to the North, Subic Bay in particular, allowed me to step through "the looking glass" and to experience a drive that was fluctuating, at the same time, between abysmal and ideal.

We have to start any Manila-based road trip with the chaos that is Manila traffic. Thursday is about as normal a traffic day in the Manila work week as any and noon would surely be a great time to take off, as most of the motoring public would probably be tucking into their meals.

It sounded like a plan, and would almost assuredly allow transit from the Mantrade Interchange on Edsa to the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) tollbooths in less than an hour. In the Greek tragedy that is the Manila bottleneck, the traffic gods, envious that a mere mortal would want to defy their power by traveling, delay-free, across the span of the metropolis, decided to doom the plan from the beginning.

In an excruciating hour and change, under a withering summer noon sun, stalled delivery vans and weaving buses (both probably agents of the traffic gods) conspired to stop me dead in my tracks.

Merge ramp

My cynicism and complaints came to a crescendo as I approached the entrance of the NLEX on Edsa, sometime after the Muñoz market. For a highway that is supposed to be the thoroughfare to the vast expanses of North Luzon, the only damned sign for the merge ramp is a small, unremarkable and deficient one that says, "Baguio."

Fine, I mean I know where to turn on Edsa to get to the NLEX. This is a small ramp that I've been using for 20 years on every northern trip I have made and still miss it once in a while. So, why is that infernal exit so hidden and only marked with a sign whose size would only usually indicate the direction to the next city or next municipality?

Higher toll for better roads

Precariously merging onto the stream of buses and cars headed north, I was in for a pleasant surprise. Fifteen seconds on the NLEX and one immediately notices the excellent road surface. The surface is so good that it made me forget the money that I paid to get onto the NLEX and the money I would again eventually have to pay at the exit.

Traffic flowed at 110-kph to 120-kph clip, only slowing for old cars that could not cope with the beautiful driving surface or drivers who would not deal with the higher rate of travel. In less than an hour, drivers can find themselves at the San Fernando exit, where many will probably debate the value of their toll payments.

I think it to be value for my money and will gladly pay a higher toll for better roads and their improved maintenance. Many I have talked to, though, regarding the higher NLEX tolls, consider it to be a true form of "highway robbery" and despite the improved service, are aghast at the toll prices.

The traffic situation in San Fernando proper is well managed enough, with a vehicular overpass that, though steep and narrow, allows transient traffic through the area to flow at a decent rate. The driving nightmare begins again when one leaves the city and begins the trek on the lahar-filled plains and dry riverbeds of Pampanga.

Kings of the road

In a two-lane provincial highway that serves to connect the NLEX to the port of Subic Bay, it is sad that tricycles are kings of the road. I do not know if their drivers and operators are intentionally out to drive the motoring public crazy, but it seems this is the case.

In the dozen or so small towns on the way to the entrance of the Subic highway, a lot of tricycles do not only swarm like flies at intersections, jockeying for pole position at the prospect of getting a hole shot at the next green light. Once out on the open road, however, they accelerate slowly to 40 kph and stay at that speed, creating dozen car processions waiting for the opportunity to overtake.

The typical tricycle driver positions himself and his side car racer in the middle of the road, impervious to appeals by motorists, both courteous and otherwise, to move aside and allow a few feet of overtaking space.

They are a brave lot, these trike drivers, as they are unflinching even in the face of loaded buses and rampaging oversized jeepneys. Only once did I see a tricycle scurry for the security of the road shoulder. It took a fully loaded dump truck and its air horn to convince the driver of his mortality, while I, on the other hand, immediately scampered at the sight and sound of "smaller" two-ton SUVs.

Disciplined driving

After an hour and a half dogfight through Pampanga and Zambales, the outlying hills of Olongapo give way to the entrance to the Subic Highway. The transition from tricycle bedlam to the disciplined driving style inside the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) is one of the most surreal I have experienced in the world. All of a sudden, there are speed limits to abide by and stop signs that must be followed.

At intersections where there are no traffic lights, people give right of way. Traffic officers are polite and professional. The road system is second to none in the Philippines when there is budget for maintenance. For a facility that was abandoned by the US 7th Fleet more than a decade ago, it is strange that the legacy of disciplined driving is something that has stuck around.

Bittersweet

It would be easy and cliché to say that the drive to Subic was bittersweet; both with the elements of good driving conditions rivaling developed nations and the third world cacophony that reminds us of our economic deprivation. Sadly, to me it was just astringent. The contrasts of the trip only make the problems of driving in the Philippines starker.

The age-old and overused adages of discipline, driver education and road safety are relevant in this case, but sadly lack any sort of editorial bite. I think it is simply that we, as a motoring nation, are not trying hard enough to improve. As proven by the examples of the NLEX and the SBMA driving experience, local efforts do often produce public benefit, albeit in varying degrees. I hate to say it but it seems that the rest of us are just being our usual selves—lazy and complacent.

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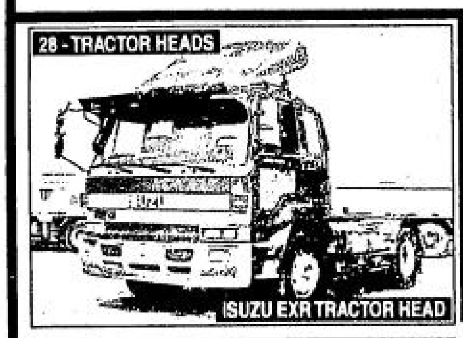
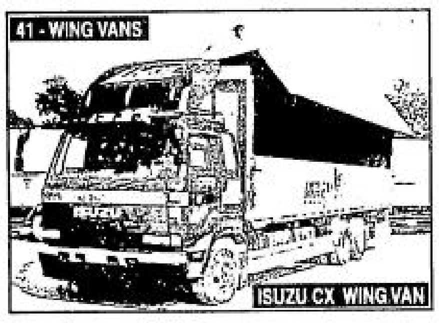
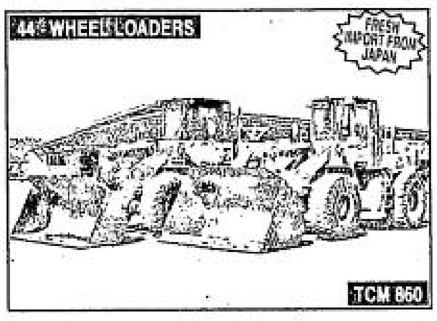


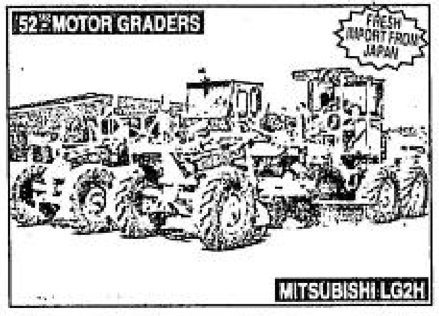
28 - TRACTOR HEADS
ISUZU EXR TRACTOR HEAD



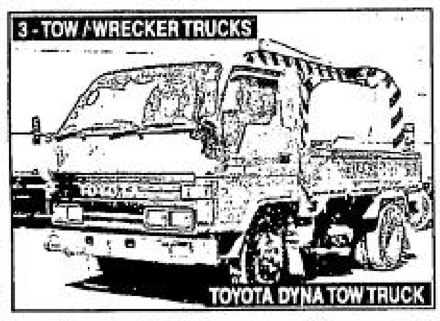
41 - WING VANS
ISUZU CX WING VAN



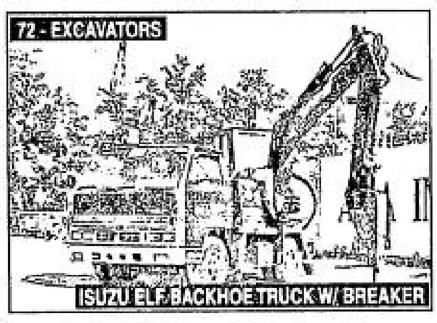
44 - WHEEL LOADERS
FRESH IMPORT FROM JAPAN
TCM 860



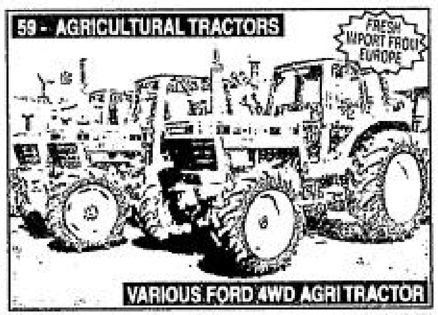
52 - MOTOR GRADERS
FRESH IMPORT FROM JAPAN
MITSUBISHI LG2H



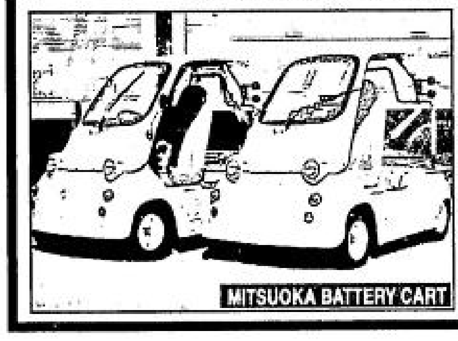
3 - TOW / WRECKER TRUCKS
TOYOTA DYNA TOW TRUCK



72 - EXCAVATORS
ISUZU ELF BACKHOE TRUCK W/ BREAKER



59 - AGRICULTURAL TRACTORS
FRESH IMPORT FROM EUROPE
VARIOUS FORD 4WD AGRI TRACTOR



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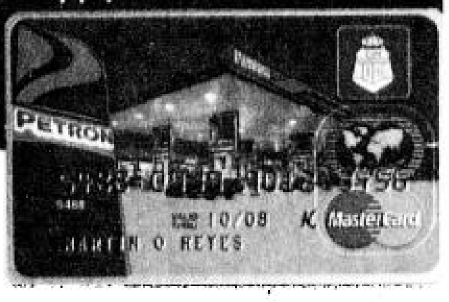

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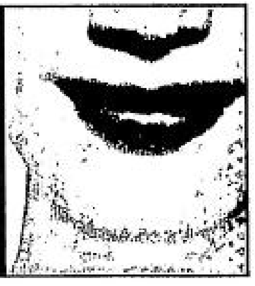

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Ready, set, glow

The scorching heat makes it impossible to deny: Summer is here again. To help you get ready for the sunny season, we've prepared a shopping guide for you: We dressed up human mannequins in clothes for an unforgettable vacation, we found bathing suits so you could turn the beach into your own sandy catwalk, we asked makeup experts to give tips for great summer looks, raided your favorite beauty stores for irresistible must-haves and asked young entrepreneurs to show off products that would get you through two months of sand and surf. All these, in 2bU!'s summer kick-off issue

Look! Skimpy swimwear!

ON BLENDA: pink and orange swimsuit, to order from Sassa. On Mayette: navy blue and white bikini, P695, Solo

ON BLENDA: pink floral bikini, P795, Freeway. On AJ: blue-and-orange halter bikini, Sunset Brazil by Chocolate, P2795

Text by Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent
Photos by Sara Black

FLIPPING through fashion magazines nowadays, you wouldn't think many Filipinas are still prudes. Bold bikinis, skimpy maillots, swimsuits that leave little to the imagination—these are the kinds of swimwear that dominate the fashion pages during summer.

Despite the popularity of these swimsuits, however, many girls still choose to cover their pricey bikinis with sarongs, shorts, or worse, shirts and swimsuits with attached ruffled skirts (all together now: yecchh!).

This may not be the case in tourist attractions such as Boracay, but check out most of the beaches in the Philippines (or Splash Island, even), and chances are, 99.9 percent of

LOOK!/ D2

kagana-gana
NEW!
Creamy Tuna
MACARONI

Here's another irresistible pasta treat from Greenwich! New Creamy Tuna Macaroni. Go ahead, take a bite. Savor the delightful flavor of tuna, mushrooms, bell pepper, cream and cheese melting in your mouth. Delicious! It only proves that when it comes to pasta, you can never go wrong with Greenwich.
ka-g greenwich

Fresh faces for summer

Text by Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent
Photos by Kai Huang, Patrick Martires and Erick Lirios

WHILE going for an all-natural look for the summer isn't a bad thing, it can get pretty boring. Sure, you can keep your basic browns and pinks, but kick up things a notch or two with bright color on your eyes, lips and cheeks. This summer, anything goes.

Check out any of our 12 looks for the summer offered by some of the top makeup brands in the country, as well as the recommended products to help you get a particular look.

MODELS:
STEPHANIE KIENLE, MYN REYES,
MAYETTE CORDERO, AISSA DE GUZMAN,
BLENDA ARRIOLA AND KAYE LAROCO
SPECIAL THANKS TO TINA TINIO,
DONNA FAYLONA, ZERLINE CHAN,
MIRA VILLANUEVA,
COOKIE MANTO AND ROBBY FRANCISCO

NARS

MAKEUP BY ANNA ROSE MACARAEG

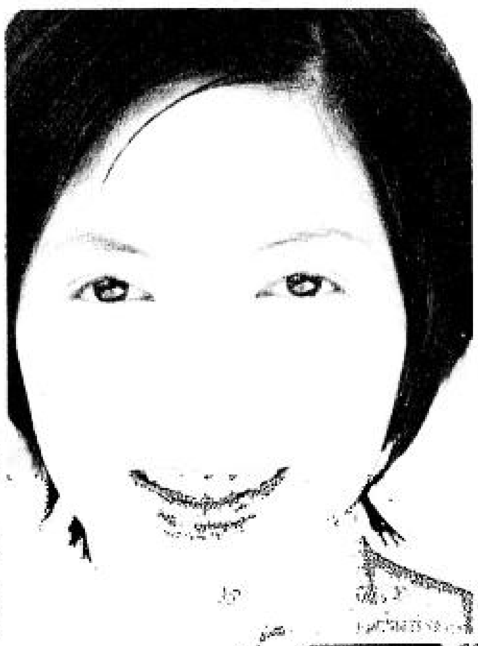
Green Eyes
Wicked eye shadow duo
Flaming Dust sheer lipstick

Afterglow
Nico blush
Windstar eye shadow duo

We like: Flaming Dust, a sheer cherry-red lipstick that makes you look like you've been eating popsicles (it's not as scary as it looks in the tube, we promise) and the eyeshadow duo in Wicked, an opal-and-pistachio combination that brightens up eyes.

NARS IS AVAILABLE AT RUSTAN'S ESSENSES MAKATI.

SUGAR BABY



MAKEUP BY LOURDES BARCELONA

Glow, Baby, Glow
Gleam Cream in Starlight
and Cream Blush in Flush

Ultraviolet Rays
Eye Shimmer and
Bronzing Cream
in Bahamas

We like: Gleam Crème in Moon Shine gives the prettiest glow and smells like sweets. It is best applied over liquid or cream blush. The '50s packaging is a plus!

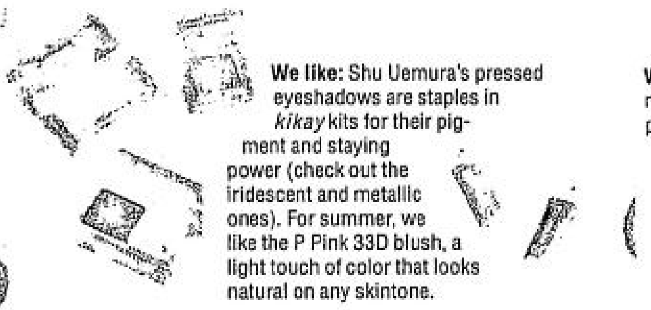
SUGAR BABY IS AVAILABLE AT ESSENSES MAKATI, ALABANG, AND GA...

SHU UEMURA

MAKEUP BY XENG ZULUETA

Reveries
IR Blue 645 eye shadow
Blush in P Pink 33D

Chic and Rouge
Brilliant Glow Eye Palette
Rouge 4 lipstick in '35



We like: Shu Uemura's pressed eyeshadows are staples in *kikay* kits for their pigment and staying power (check out the iridescent and metallic ones). For summer, we like the P Pink 33D blush, a light touch of color that looks natural on any skintone.

SHU UEMURA IS AT RUSTAN'S MAKATI AND RUSTAN'S TOWER, EDSA SHANGRI-LA.

Mermai
Hydro-P
in Aqua

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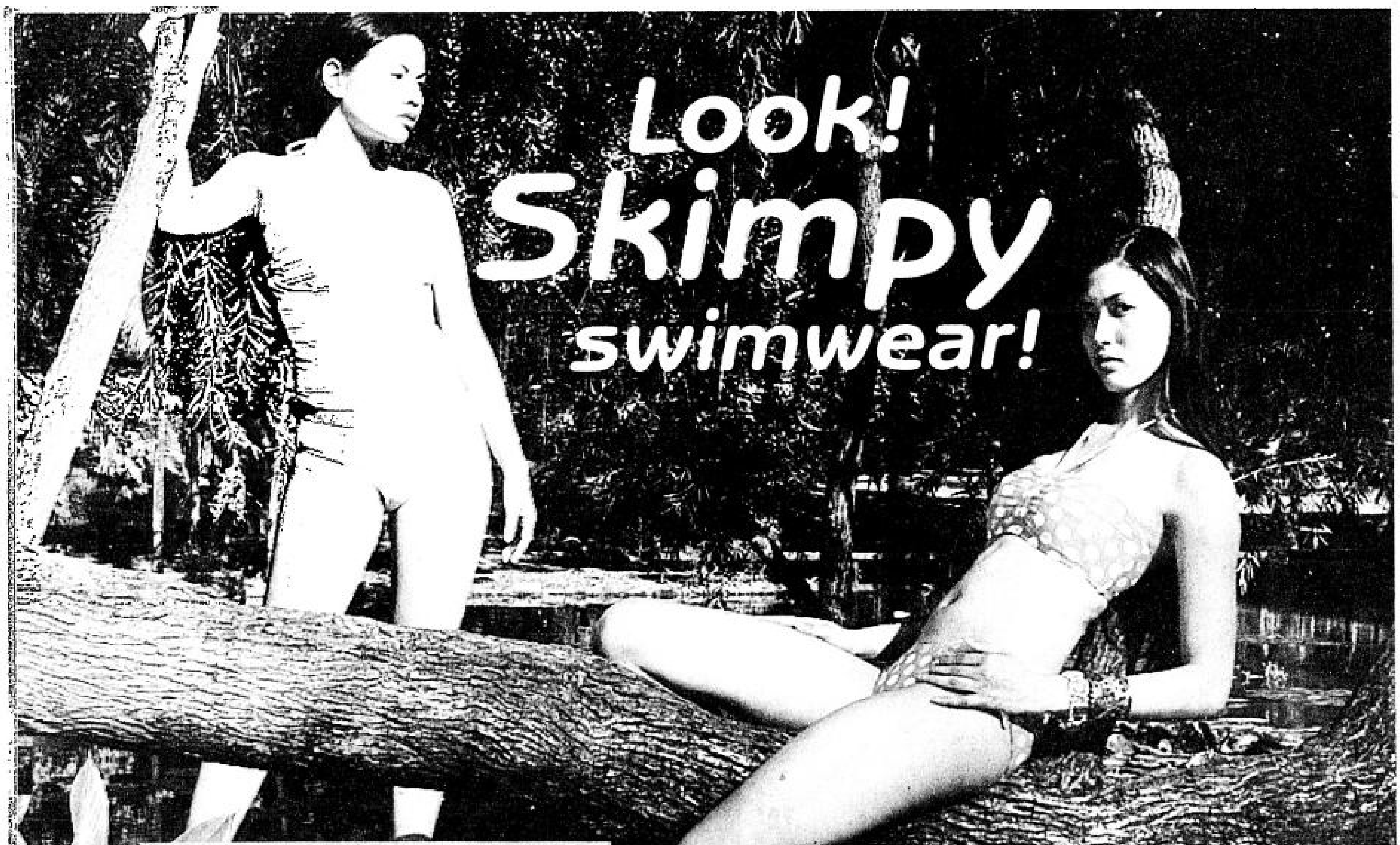
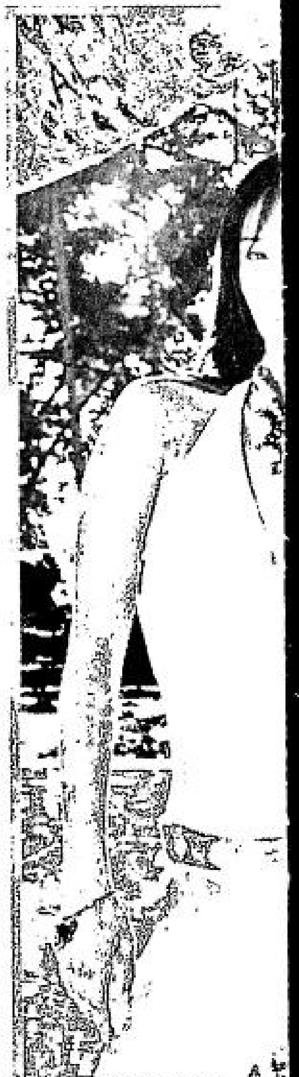
Look! Skimpy swimwear!



ON MAYETTE: rainbow-striped tankini, P799, F&H; on Blenda: Pink polka dot bikini, P795, Freeway

FLORAL orange tankini, P695, Freeway. Yellow shawl, P299, F&H



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P39
Bler
with
P79
fron

REVERSIBLE polka-dot-and-pink bandeau bikini, P1,199, F&H

From page D1

the women are wearing a cover-up of some sort. The few brave souls who dare to bare all in their bikinis are often the target of snide comments and incredulous looks.

Our swimsuit fashion shoot proved to be quite an interesting experience. When we got to our location, for some reason, a lot of people were already hanging out. The models began squirming uncomfortably, but being the troopers that they were, they wriggled out of their tops and posed in all their glistening glory.

After five seconds, everyone in the area was looking in our direction.

It wasn't so bad, really. No one came up to us, and no wolf whistles were heard, but the spectators all had this uniform gaping look. Pretty soon, a small crowd composed of small children and college students had settled in a few meters away from us, licking ice cream cones bought from the *mang sorbetero* who had come to gawk along with the *taho* vendor.

The thing is, we did nothing new or scandalous (we didn't stop any motorists, for one thing). But the culture of prudishness clearly lives on, causing people to put malice into something quite innocent.

Forget pretending to be shy. Slip into that swimsuit and ditch the shorts. No use buying that five-thousand peso bikini if you're going to hide it under a pair of board shorts.

E-mail the author at biancaconsunji@yahoo.com

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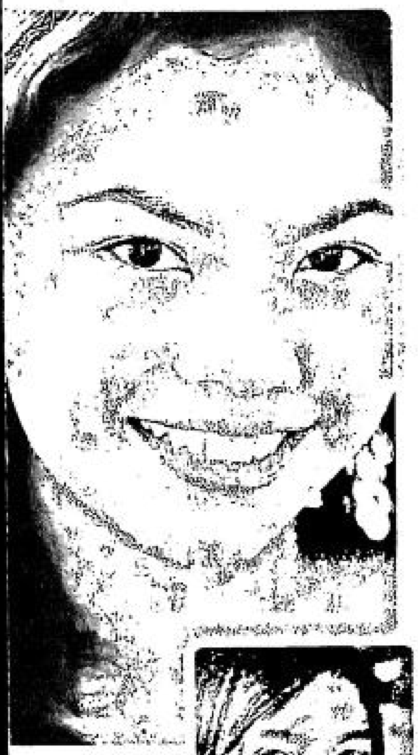
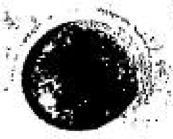


MAKEUP BY LEE ROBERTO

owder eyeshadow
Shimmer

Bronze Goddess
ydro-Powder eye-
dow in Gold Light

ke: Hydro-Powder eyeshadow in Aqua Shim-
a cooling cream eye shadow that turns to
er upon application, and the color allows you to go smoky without being overwhelming. We also love their lip gloss in Red Coral, a sheer orange color that goes with anything.

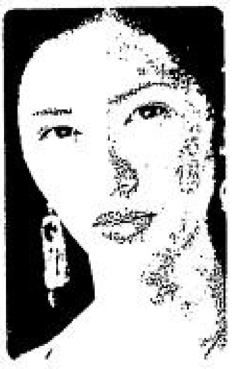


SHISEIDO IS AVAILABLE AT LEADING DEPARTMENT STORES.

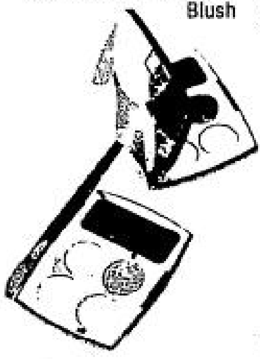
LANCOME

MAKEUP BY GELA LAUREL

Blue Eyes
Exceptional Wear Eye Color Quad and Illuminating Loose Powder



Natural Look
Juicy Tubes in Rose Baby and Pommette Cream Blush



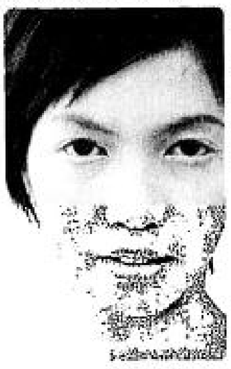
We like: The Sea, Sand, Sun palette is tops in our book—with four eyeshadows and a Juicy Shine lipcolor. You're all set for the summer.

LANCÔME IS AVAILABLE AT RUSTAN'S.

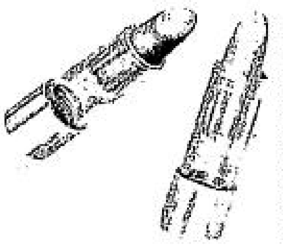
PIEDS NUS

MAKEUP BY LEE ROBERTO

Ice Queen
Cream eye shadow and Lip Neo lip gloss



Jap-Pop
GR111 eye palette and Lip Neo in RD710



We like: The Gradational Eyes palettes have four goof-proof colors that you can take from day to night. Also check out their Lip Neo retractable glosses and Rouge Aqua X lipsticks, which have great shine and color.

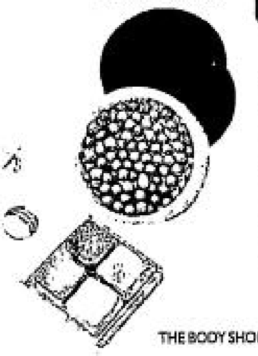
PIEDS NUS BY SHISEIDO IS AVAILABLE AT MY BEAUTY HUB AT 6750, MAKATI.

THE BODY SHOP

MAKEUP BY MARGE APACIBLE

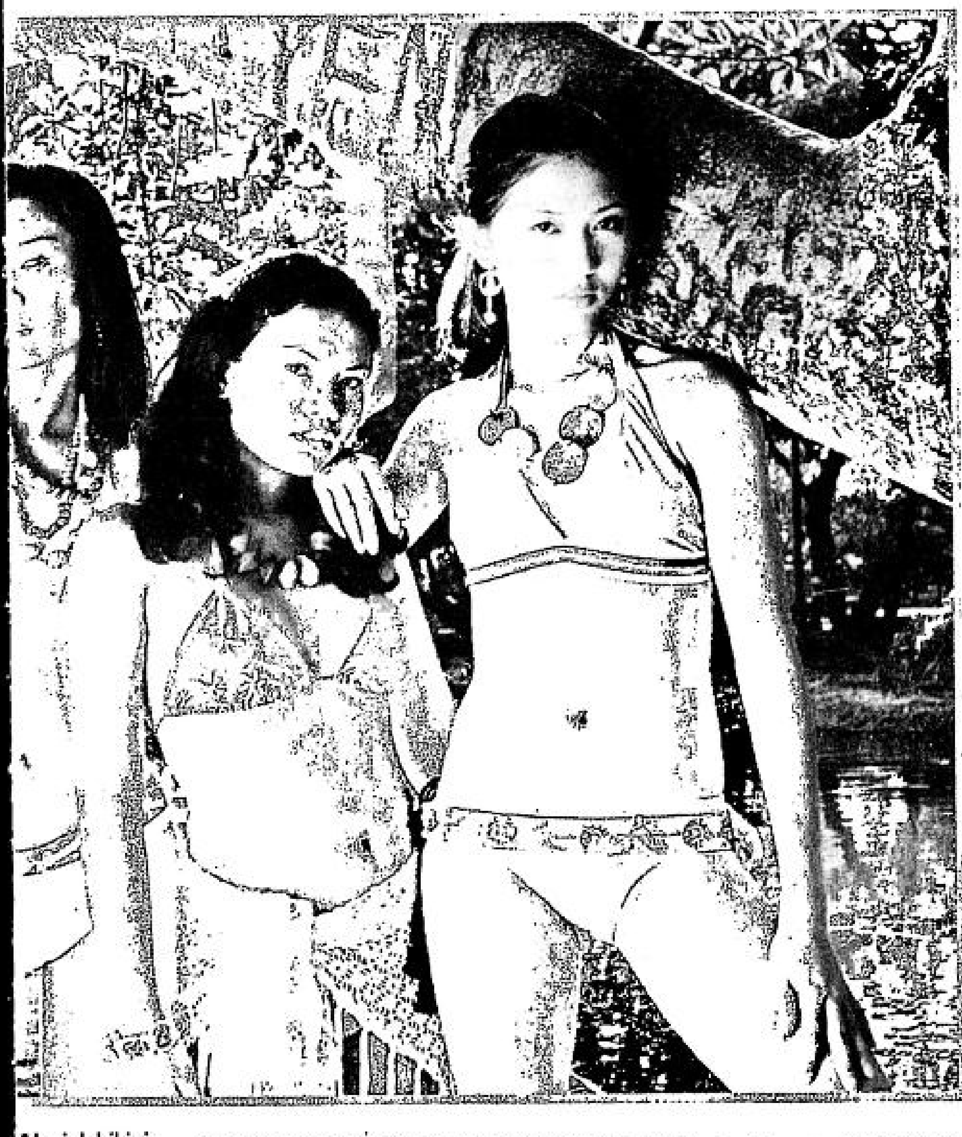
Glowing Pink
Shimmer cubes palette
Cheek colour in Raspberry pink
Brilliance powder bronze

Fresh Femme
Bronzing stick



We like: Hi-shine lip treatment in Red Gleam and Bronze Beam—packed with color and sparkle, these glosses taste great and last long, too!

THE BODY SHOP IS AVAILABLE AT LEADING MALLS.



AJ: pink bikini,
colate. Sequined
by Happy David.
Mayette: orange
g bikini, Sunset
zil by Chocolate;
heted shawl,
9, F&H. On
da: blue bikini
rainbow trim,
9, F&H. Belt
Happy David

ON MAYETTE: polka dot top, Solo. White bottom, F&H. On AJ: Pink-and-orange top, Freeway. Bottom, F&H. On Blenda: pink floral string bikini, P695, Freeway

PLAID halter top and shorts set, P895, Freeway

ALL ACCESSORIES BY HAPPY DAVID

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LILY

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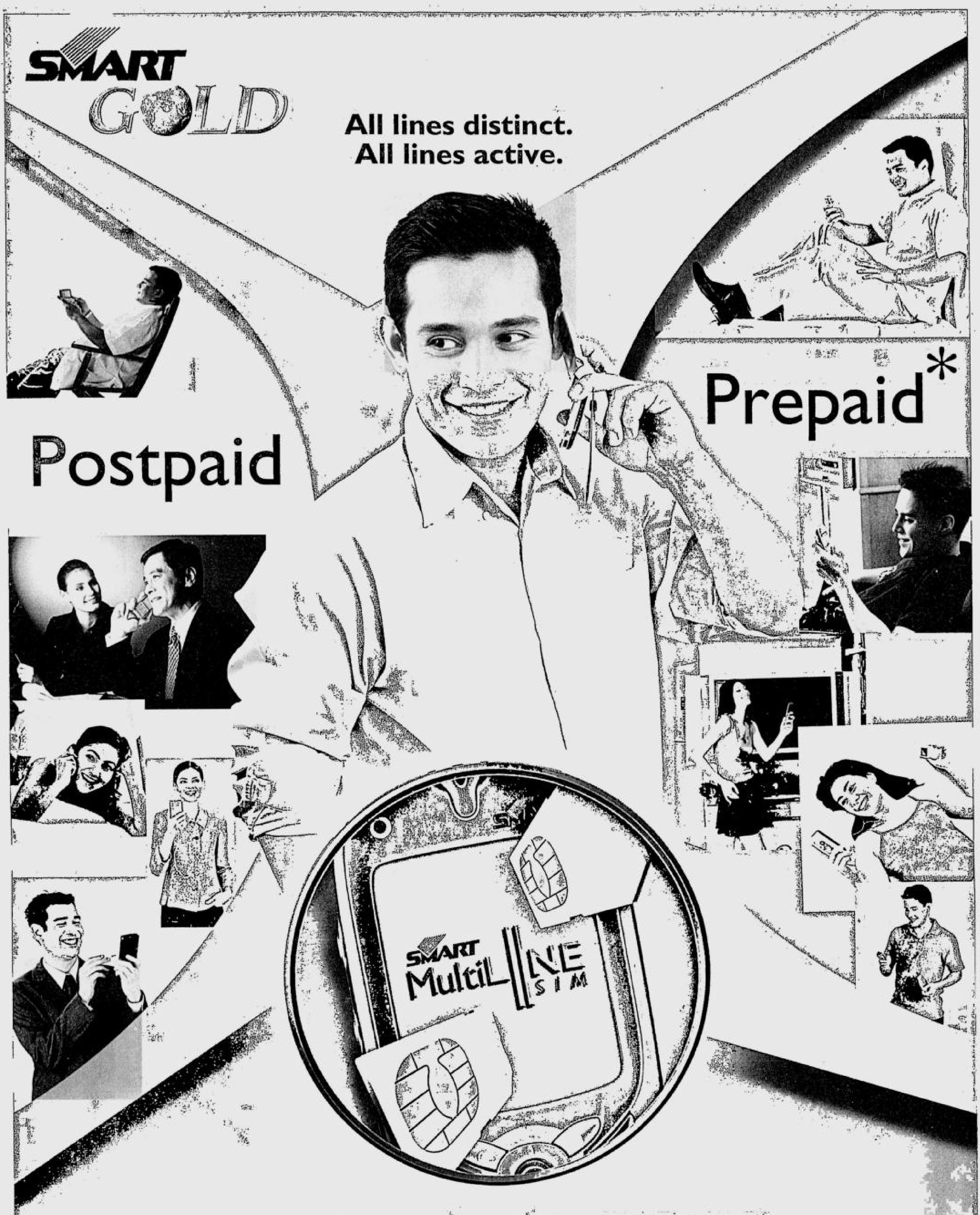

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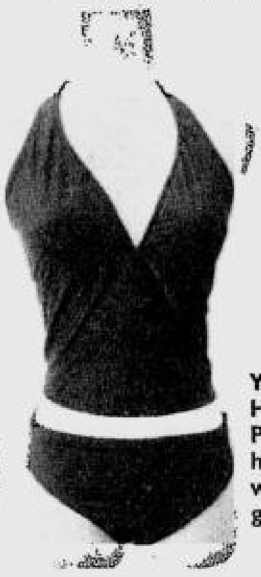
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

LIFESTYLE

P99 DUNKIN' DONUTS Choco Rings

2 girls, a guy and a swimsuit line

25-YEAR-OLDS Lorraine (in white), Brian (in green), and Lala (in green) are the brains behind Gypsy Swimwear.


YSABEL Red Halter Tankinis, P1,800. The halters can be worn as tops for gimmicks.

Text by Katrina Yap
Photos by Betoy Johnson

EVER found yourself lusting over a beautiful swimsuit you just couldn't wear because of your less-than-perfect figure? Or maybe finding that perfect fit only to discover it would eat a chunk of your savings?

Fret no more. Gypsy is a swimsuit brand designed to flatter your best assets. The brainchild of Lorraine Imperial, Lala de Leon and Brian Sy, Gypsy swimwear can be worn for various beach activities, and are reasonably priced.

The idea of having their own swimsuit line came up only in 2004 when college friends Lorraine and Lala went on a scuba diving trip. The two talked about how difficult it was to find decent swimsuits in the country.

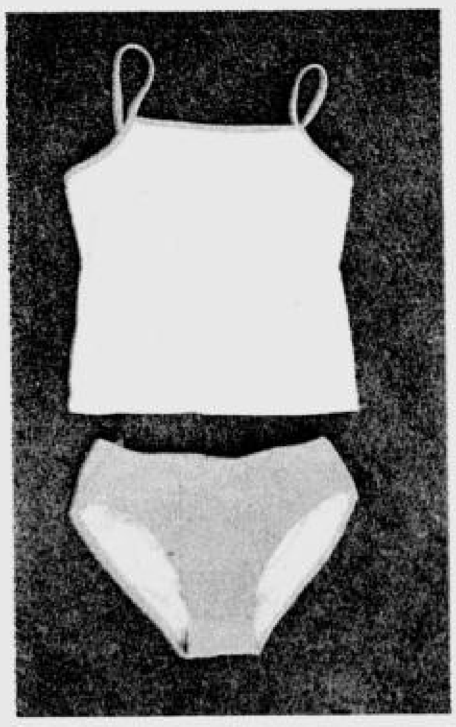
"I needed something that I could wear because I had some problem areas," Lala says. "And I wanted something that wasn't too revealing," adds Lorraine.

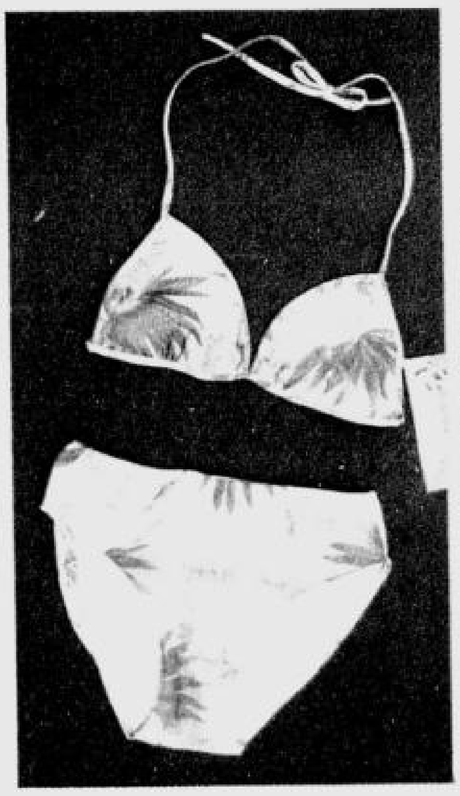
They also wanted swimsuits that would also serve a lot of purposes—for swimming, sunbathing, lounging, and of course, diving.

So the idea of producing their own suits popped up. But the management graduates (Lala graduated with a degree in Management; Lorraine in management engineering) realized they couldn't venture into the business on their own.

Lorraine invited a fellow diver, Brian Sy, to join their team. Brian says he was at first only a sounding board for Lorraine's ideas. But he also realized its business potential, so eventu

2 GIRLS/ E2


ALICIA Aqua Cami Tankini, P1,550


SAMANTHA Earth Floral Bikini, P1,800

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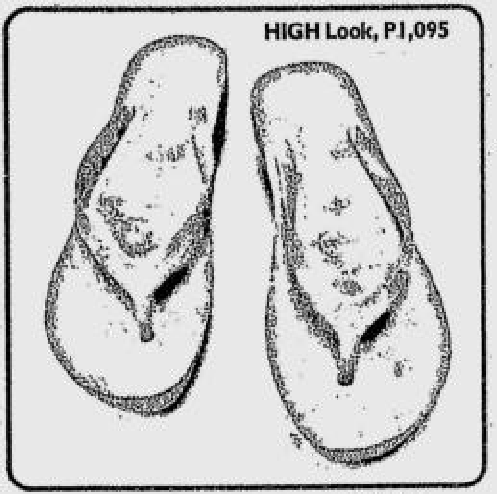

HIGH Look, P1,095

BRASIL Samba, P895

STYLE Havaianas, P755

SURF for Men, P995

Flip flop fix

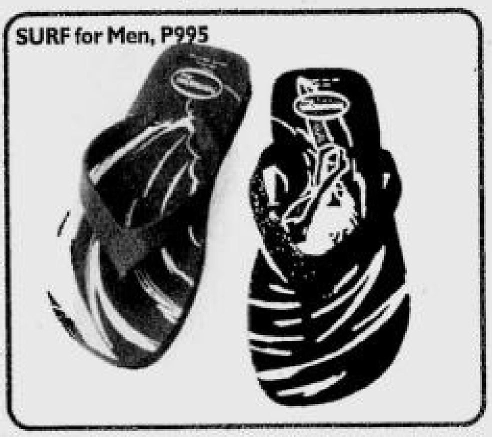
Text by Pam Pastor
Photos by Raffy Lerma

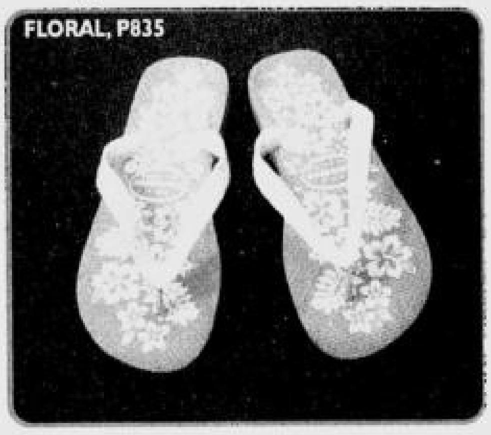
WHAT surprises does the Havaianas factory hold for us this summer?

A lot, apparently. Anne Arcenas-Gonzalez, Havaianas Philippines' VP for Marketing, allows us a peek.

These eight pairs are just a preview, an appetizer of sorts.

Don't invade the stores yet, the new batch of our beloved Brazilian-made flip flops will arrive in shops this weekend.


SURF for Men, P995

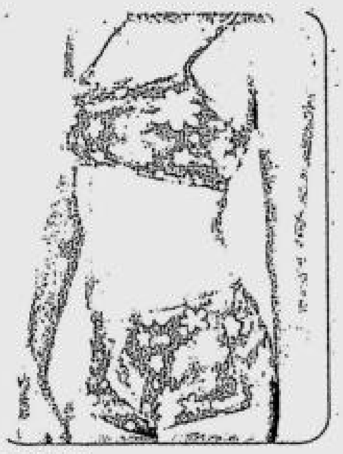

FLORAL, P835

KITTEN Heel high, P2,295

KITTEN Heel low, P1,995

P599.75

P599.75


P549.75

Sassy Swimwear

By Pam Pastor

POP quiz, hotshot.

The biggest challenge of summer is: A, staying cool. B, getting an even tan. C, finding the right swimsuit.

My answer is C.

Because turning on the air-conditioner and stocking up on ice cream is easy, and tanning lotions and tanning salons are now as common as Paris Hilton's indiscretions. But finding the right swimsuit? I bet even Einstein had problems.

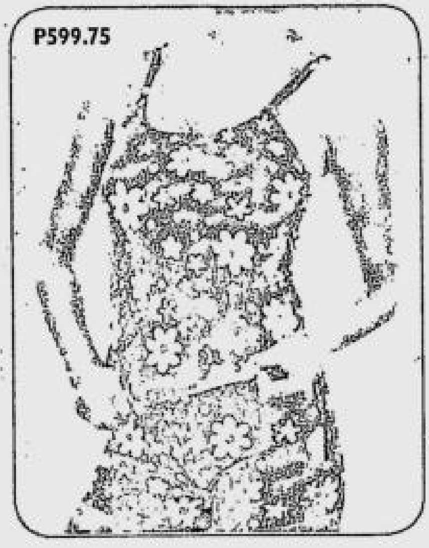
Good swimsuits are hard to spot. The quality ones are expensive, the inexpensive ones snag easily.

But Sassa, a brand that has been around for two years now, gives the beach-bound a good alternative.

This line, which used to fall under Mona Lisa, an intimate apparel brand, offers stylish, comfortable and affordable active and swimwear. This season's collection boasts of bikinis and tankinis that are colorful as well as easy on the eyes and the pocket.

There are also swimsuits that come with matching skirts or boyleg cuts, if you don't want to bare too much skin.

Check out Sassa at the Sassa Activewear boutique on the 2nd level of Ali Mall and in department stores such as The Landmark, Robinsons Galleria, Shopwise and SM Supercenters Bicutan, Sucat and Marilao. Or email sassa@barbizonfashion.com.


P599.75

The answer to summer's biggest challenge lies in your favorite department store

P599.75

P599.75

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P749.75

P599.75

2 girls, a guy and a swimsuit line

From page E1

ally he joined the girls in endless brainstorming sessions after work, for coffee, and during weekends.

What were supposed to be gimmicks and night outs turned into business meetings. But the group says that wasn't too difficult. "It's a good thing we were friends and we could go out and at the same time talk business," says Lorraine.

After a painstaking five months of searching for suppliers, contractors, and distributors, it was a go for the swimsuit line. The girls designed the swimsuits themselves (with Brian giving his seal of approval), while also helping out Brian with the finances, supply, distribution, and marketing. Thus was Gypsy was born.

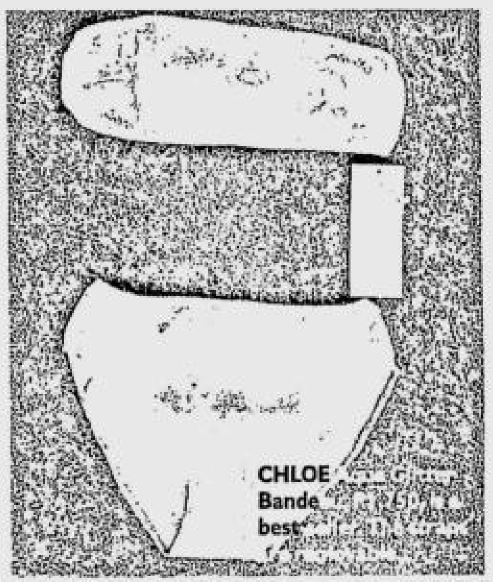
The three also say it pays to enlist the help of friends. In this case, Lorraine's designer friend from the United States made their logo. Brian had help on the website from a friend who's also in the US. Lala's sister designed the swimsuits' tag. Lorraine's boyfriend took the photos for Gypsy's online catalog. And all their other friends helped promote the products through word-of-mouth.

The name of the brand is perfect for the swimsuit line. A true beach bum leads a gypsy-like lifestyle, Lala explains, always running off in search of the next fabulous beach or island. Today, Gypsy reflects the fun, free-spirited, bohemian beach culture. It's all about adventure.

Only three months old, the swimwear is already making waves. Gypsy is now available in various stores in the Metro, and is even in Boracay and Cebu. It has also graced the pages of popular magazines.

Gypsy is sold at Solea, 2/F, Independent Lifestyles Section, Power Plant Mall, Rockwell; Kitty Kat, Eastwood City, Libis; Treebu, D'Mall, Boracay and Cebu. Call 0919-6926280. Visit www.gypsygirl.us or e-mail info@gyspygirl.us

E-mail the author at trina_yap@edsamail.com.ph


CHLOE Bande best

SAMANTHA White Bikini, P1,800, was worn by Francine Prieto in Cosmo's March 2005 issue.

How to choose the right swimsuit

SHOPPING for the perfect swimsuit takes skill—you have to know what works for you and your body so you can show off your best assets and not your problem areas.

Lorraine and Brian, the team behind Gypsy Swimwear, share some tips on finding that perfect swimsuit.

1 Never buy a loose suit. The suit should fit you perfectly when it's dry. All suits stretch a bit when wet. "Otherwise you'll look "baggy" in the water," Lala says.

2 Get the right suit for your figure. If you're lucky to have an hourglass figure, flaunt it with a bikini. Try bandeau style—it'll emphasize your shape. Bikinis also work for slender or athletic-shaped girls. The bikini will help create curves.

If you're round or oval shaped, draw attention to the shoulders instead of the waist. Go for dark colors and halter styles. Halters also work best for pear-shaped girls.

But if you're top-heavy (broad shoulders, tapered bottom), you'll need a suit with a high neckline to balance out everything. Sporty styles work best to minimize the top.

3 Consider your comfort level. You don't have to blindly abide by the rules above. Lorraine says, "We found that skinny girls wouldn't necessarily go for the bikini cut. They also like the halter style. What's important is that it's comfortable."

4 Do a final check on the stitchings. Seams should be secure. "You should hear no cracking sound when you stretch the swimsuit," says Brian. "There should be no sound of any material breaking."

Trina Yap

Fashionably cheap bikinis

From page E4

MELLOW yellow

AZURE delight

"I love bikinis and I love going to the beach, but every time I looked for swimsuits, it seemed there were limited choices for bikinis in the Philippines," says Hazel.

That's when she decided to put up her own swimwear line.

Beach-loving fashionistas, head to NBC Tent's Shop@the Fort bazaar on March 19-20, where Hazel's wares will be on sale. Or call her at 0920-9623780 or e-mail dbeachclub@yahoo.com

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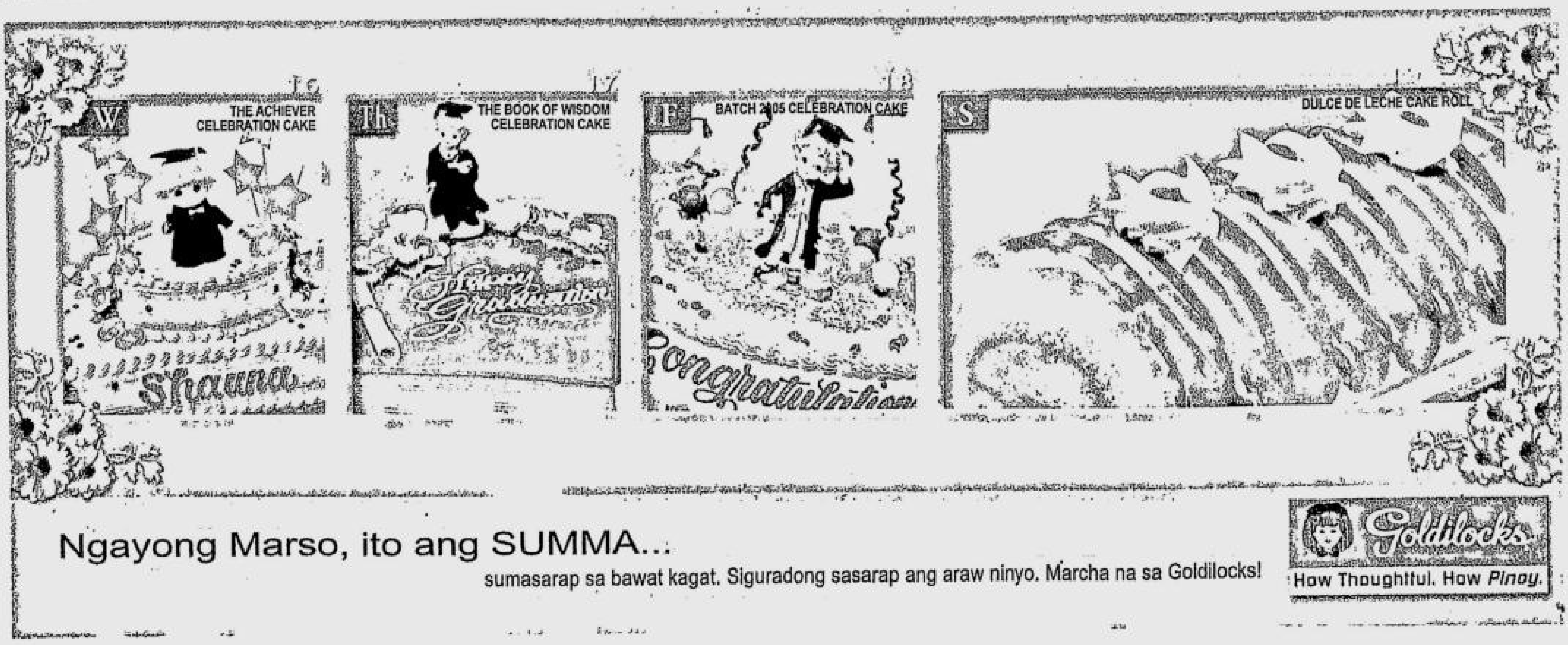
Promo will run from February 16 – April 15, 2005.

See leaflets for details. Per DOH-BFAD Permit no. 0037 Series of 2005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S 19 DULCE DE LECHE CAKE ROLL

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No.1205 series of 2005

BE a beach goddess!

Fashionably cheap bikinis

Text by Kristine Ching
2bU! Correspondent
Photos by Rudy Esperas

IN need of glam bikinis for your beach days?

Check out Hazel's swimwear line, which offers a wide range of styles (bandeau, tube tops, boy shorts, tankinis, triangle tops) and designs (safari, florals, plain, stripes, polka dots).

Some sets come with matching skirt or sarong, and at P900-P1,200 per set, that's a steal.

FASHIONABLY/ E3

FLORAL fantasy

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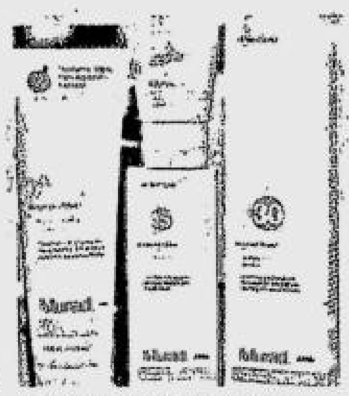
FOR THE perfect pout. Laura Mercier Lip Color in Amaretto, P895. Available at Rustan's Essenses Makati.

THREE-IN-ONE. Forget lugging around lots of bottles during beach and road trips. Philosopy 3-in-1 Ultra Rich Shampoo, Conditioner and Body Wash in Strawberry Ice Cream, Margarita and Daiquiri, P995. Available at Beauty Bar Glorietta.



FOR YOUR PROTECTION. Murad Waterproof Sunblock, P1,300; Oil-free Sunblock Sheer Tint, P1,000. Available at Rustan's Essenses Makati.

PARADISE in bottles. Comptoir Sud Pacifique's O'Pomelo and Amour Cacao fragrances, P2,950; and Muscade Orange candle, P1,450. Available at Rustan's Essenses Makati.

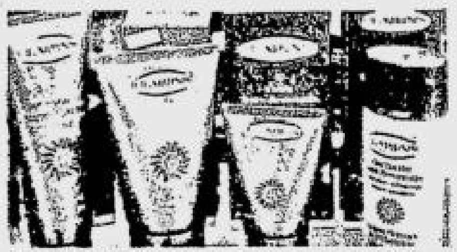
Your summer beauty loot

By Pam Pastor
Photos By Jim Guiao Punzalan

2BU! RAIDED your favorite beauty shops to find good buys that are bound to make your summer hotter, whether you plan to spend it on the beach or in the crazy city.

YOUR SUMMER/ F3

SUMMERSHINE. Dior Addict Ultra-Gloss in different colors. Available at Rustan's Essenses Makati.



FAN-TAN-STIC. Clarins Liquid Bronze Self Tanning, P1,090; Sheer Bronze Self-tanning Hydrating Gel, P1,090; Sheer Bronze Tinted Self-tanning For Legs, P1,000; Self-tanning Instant Gel, P1,090. Available at Rustan's Essenses Makati.

LANCÔME LOVE. Protect your face against UVA and UVB rays with UV Expert for the Face SPF 50, P2,495; get natural-looking shiny lips with Star Gloss, P1,150; this light water-based moisturizer will get you through summer, P1,550; treat yourself to a dose of Aroma Fit Healthy Body Treatment, P3,250. Available at your favorite beauty stores.

CITRUS CITRUS. Satsuma bath and shower gel smells yummy, P270. Purchase it along with the body lotion. Available at The Body Shop.

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KEEP YOUR hair tangle-free with Body Shop's Bilberry Leave-In Detangler, P545. Available at The Body Shop outlets.

ROMY HOMILLADA

FOR THE beach goddess. Amazing Grace Perfumed Body Glow by Philosophy, P1,450. Available at Beauty Bar Glorietta.

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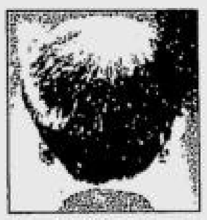
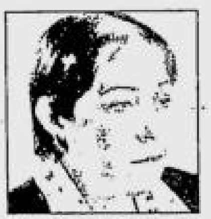
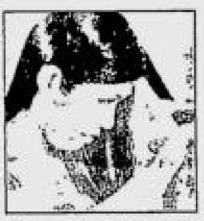

Diffuse thinning of hair all over the head

Moderate hair loss on the crown or hairline

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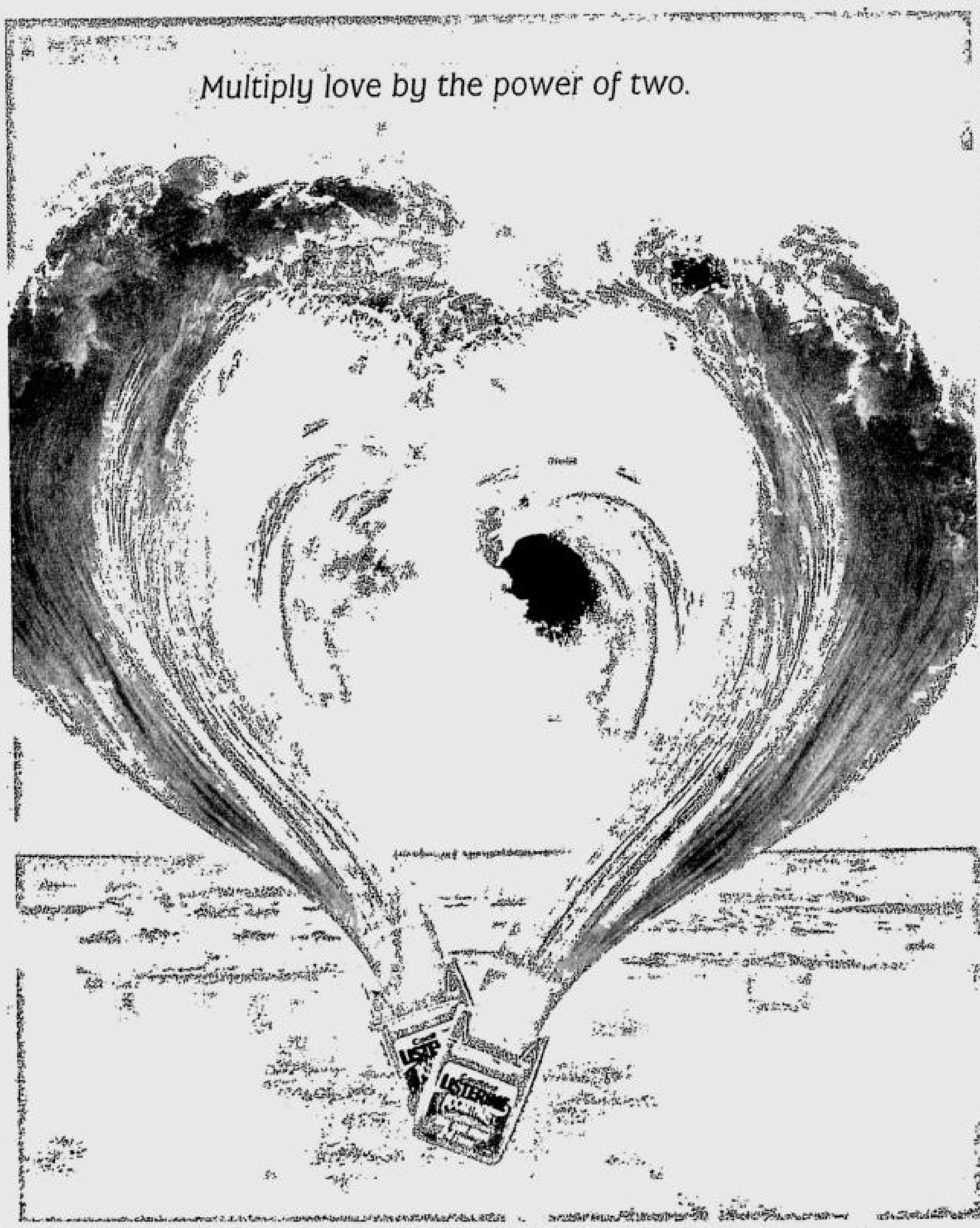
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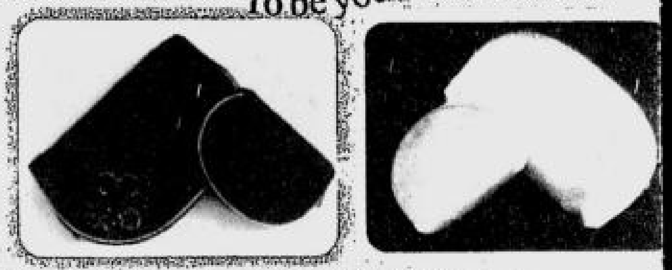
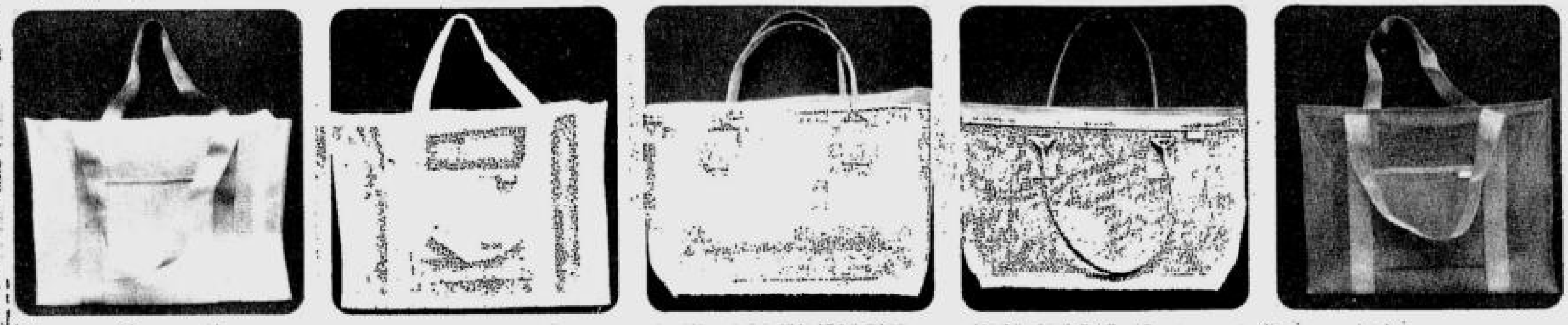




25-YEAR-OLD multimedia designer Dustin Yu's family has been manufacturing plastic sheeting and materials used for folding beds, chairs, colorful *bayong* and fishing nets. But revolutionizing his family's business, Dustin decided to make the move from fish to fashion by designing mesh beach bags. Tarte bags can hold everything fr your suntan lotion and your beach tow to your camera and the book you want read while sunbathing. This carry-all is also big enough for packing all your roa trip needs. With prices ranging from ju P130- P160, you can stock up on differe colors to make sure they match your bathing suit. Call 0917-8321123 or 9836035. E-mail tartebags@yahoo.cor or visit www.tartebags.tk

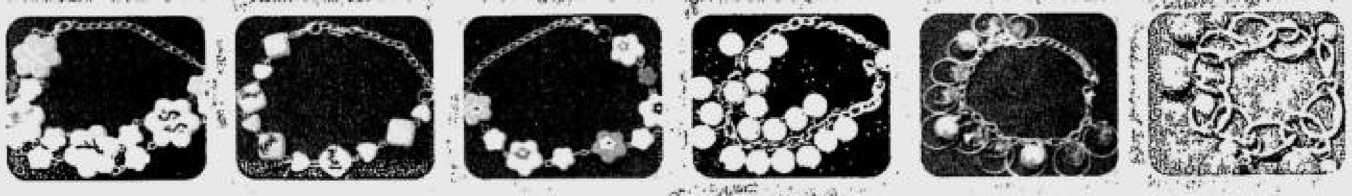
PHOTOS BY JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN AND RYA

Hot summer picks

By Pam Pastor

AS IF your shopping carts aren't overloaded yet, we also asked some young entrepreneurs to show us their good stuff.

NICOLE Serrano's The Beachbaby Clothing has a fab line of cotton loungewear, sleepwear and beachwear. Cropped pants, lounge pants and capris come in a wide array of colors—aqua, mint, candy pink, mocha, navy, black, white, sunny yellow, cool melon and fuchsia—that are perfect for your lazy summer days. Visit thebeachbaby.blogspot.com



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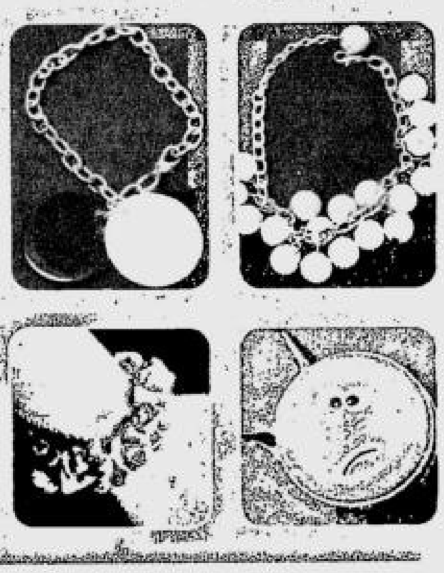
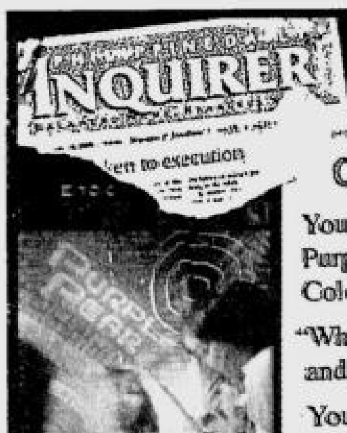




INQUEST FILES

CHAPTER 4: A Woman Scorned

You awake with a splitting headache and wonder if you have simply dreamed about the murder at the Purple Pear. Reaching under your pillow, you confirm what you have just been dreading. It is all true. Cold between your fingers is Jerson's cell phone, which you snatched under the noses of the police.

"What are you getting yourself into? Just let it go." you tell yourself. But you've always been extremely curious and you realize that for better or for worse, you need to get to the truth. There is no compromising on that.

You prop yourself against a pillow and scroll down hesitantly to Pic-09 to find a picture of a woman on the dance floor. Who is she? She seems vaguely familiar.

Oh yes, you tell yourself, after rubbing your eyes and looking at the picture more intently. It is Vivienne Ledesma, the wedding planner known for being a stickler for details and more popularly known for her infectious laughter. A fixture at many hip social gatherings, she has always struck you as being sophisticated yet friendly.

You also know she was romantically linked to Jerson. You may have seen them once or twice entering a theater hall or lounging at the lobby of a posh hotel. They made a handsome couple, everyone agreed.

You remember, however, that you too were storing pictures in your own phone and so you decide to check out the images you took of the dance floor. True enough, both Vivienne and Jerson are there but it is this picture you have of them that disturbs you.

Here, it's a different Vivienne you see. Maybe it's the frown on her forehead that concerns you. Or the unusual pout on her lips. Perhaps the tense fingers ready to claw at anyone. She seems deeply upset and you wonder what could have made her very distraught.

You continue to fix your eyes on the image and you begin to notice a tiny shimmering object flying in midair. Vivienne has apparently hurled something at Jerson and judging by the defeated look in his eyes, you know that it's something of great significance.

Q2 What did Vivienne throw at Jerson?

A. Necklace with locket
B. Apartment keys
C. Engagement ring
D. Cell phone
E. Brooch

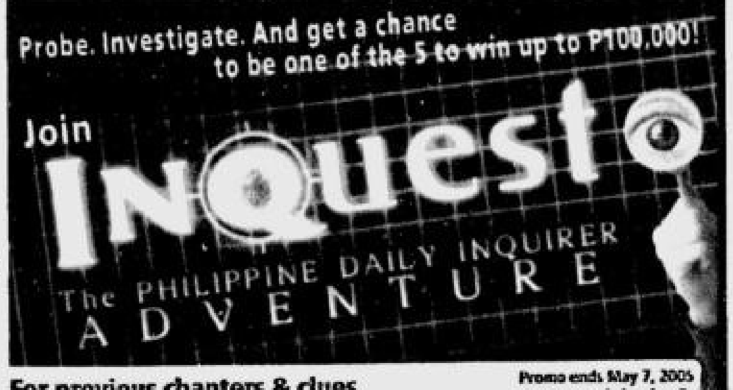
The INQuest Adventure is a work of fiction. As such, events, places or persons, living or dead, is purely co

To help you answer the question, search the LIFESTYLE section on Friday, March 18, and on Saturday, March 19. You may also visit www.inquestor.com.

To answer, text INQ Q<question #> <answer> (Ex: INQ Q1 E) to 2320 for Globe/Touch Mobile (P2.50/text) and Sun Cellular (P2.00/text) subscribers or 309 for Smart/Addict/Talk 'N Text (P2.50/text) subscribers. Maximum of 3 text answers per question. Send in your answers by March 19 to qualify for the weekly draw on March 28.

Then, proceed to read Chapter 5 of our murder mystery in the Inquirer's LIFESTYLE section on Sunday, March 20. You're getting closer to finding out who the culprit is!

To join, register first by texting in this format: INQ Reg <full name>*<complete address>*<age>*<gender>. (Ex. INQ Reg Juan dela Cruz*1234 Ortigas Avenue Pasig*34*M). Send to 2320 for Globe/Touch Mobile and Sun Cellular subscribers or 309 for Smart/Addict/Talk'N Text subscribers. Free registration.



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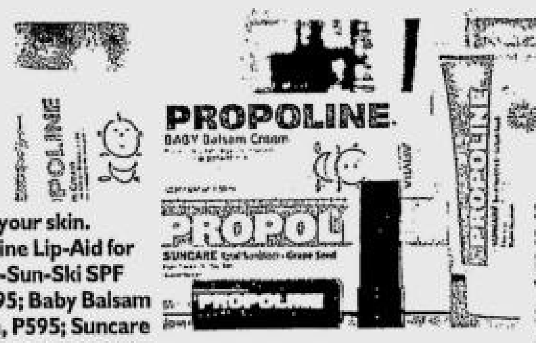
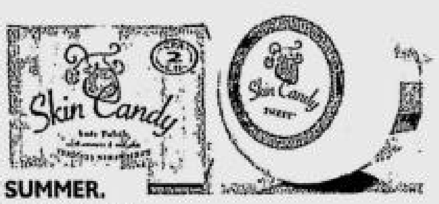
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Your summer beauty loot

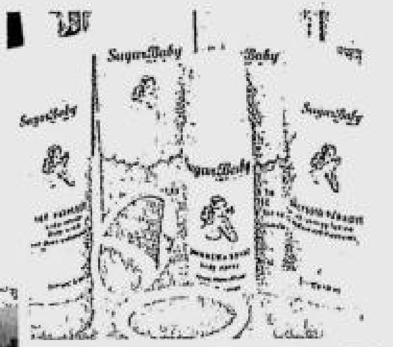
From page F1



BABY your skin. Propoline Lip-Aid for Sports-Sun-Ski SPF 20, P295; Baby Balsam Cream, P595; Suncare Total Sunblock, P995

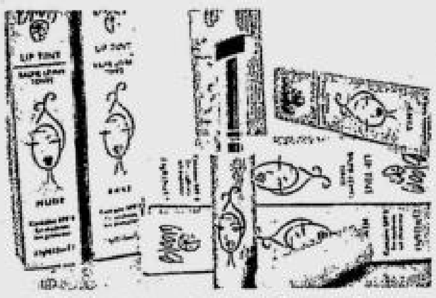


SWEET SUMMER. Spa 2 Go Skin Candy Body Polish with Vitamin E and Aloe in Strictly Strawberry. Available at Beauty Bar Glorietta.



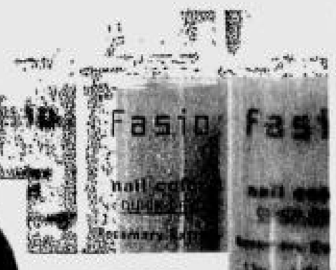
FOR THE beach princess. Sugar Baby Ice Princess Silky Smooth Body Scrub, P595; Princess in Paradise Self-tanning Lotion, P795; Shimmer 'n Shine Body Spray, P695; Glow Baby Glow Bronzing Crème, P945. Available at Rustan's Essenses Makati.

HAIR ME OUT. Let your locks feel your love with Phyto Plage Protective Beach Spray, P795; Hydrating After Sun Mist P795; Moisturizing Hair and Body Wash, P745; Protective Styling Gel, P745. Available at Rustan's Essenses Makati



LIPLUCK. Bloom Liptint in Tint, Veil, Nude, Bare, Silk, Stain, P495. Available at Beauty Bar Glorietta.

MOONLIGHT MAGIC. Youngblood Lunar Dust, P1,395. Available at Beauty Bar Glorietta.

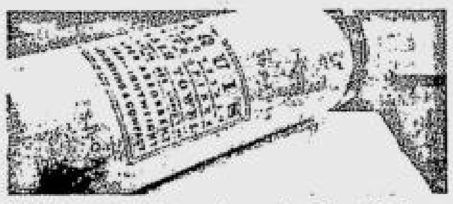


GET READY for a pedi. Fasio Nail Color, P145 each. Available at Rustan's Essenses Makati.

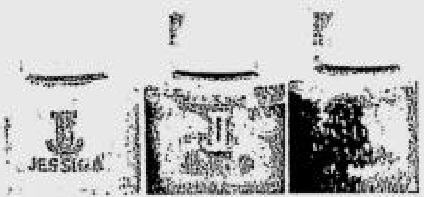
THE COOL RULE. Give yourself some summer lovin' with Ralph Lauren's newest sexily floral fragrance Ralph Cool. Available at your favorite beauty stores.

CLASS and sass. Limited-edition Dior Me, Dior Me Not fragrance and eye palette. Price available upon request. Available at Rustan's Essenses Makati.

MAKEUP FIX. Six Shimmering Eyeshadows and Six Glamorous Lip Glosses by Wicked Sista, P775. Available at Beauty Bar Glorietta.



SAY GOODBYE to going out with wet hair. After a swim, reach for your Aquis Essentials Super Absorbent Hair Towel, P1,150. Available at Beauty Bar Glorietta.



A GIRL can never have enough nail polish. Jessica Nail Color in Flirty, Raspberry and Purple Essence, P175 each

NOT FOR EATING. Asquith & Somerset Homemade Soap Bar in Raspberries and Cream, Lemon Meringue, Strawberries and Cream and Blue Poppy, P295 each. Available at Beauty Bar Glorietta.

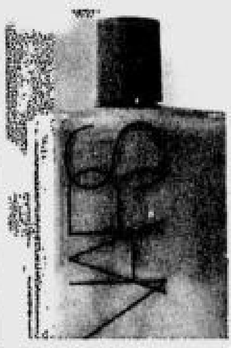
DOUBLE-EDGED sword. Protect and moisturize with Ole Henriksen Herbal Day Crème SPF15, P2,175. Available at Beauty Bar Glorietta.

BRING the beach home. We are in love with this scent. Bobbi Brown Beach Eau De Parfum, P3,800, and sandbar. Available at Rustan's Essenses Makati.

TAKE it Essie. Nail Color in Can't Filmfest, Standing Ovation and 18 Carrot, P425 each. Available at Rustan's Essenses Makati.

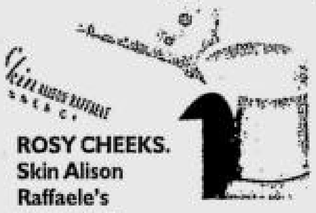
GET a dose of Vitamin C. Body Shop's Vitamin C Facial Spritz, P545, gives instant refreshment, even when you're wearing makeup. Available at The Body Shop outlets nationwide.

ROMY HOMILLADA



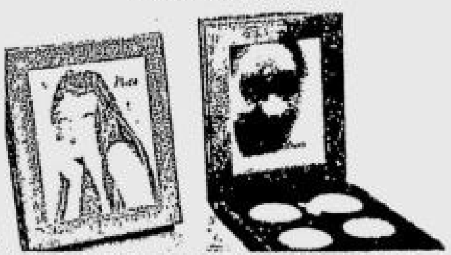
ENHANCE your tan with Nars Body Glow, P2,950. Available at Rustan's Essenses Makati.

PREPARE your feet for sandal season. Spa Organics Pedicure set, P875. Available at Beauty Bar Glorietta.

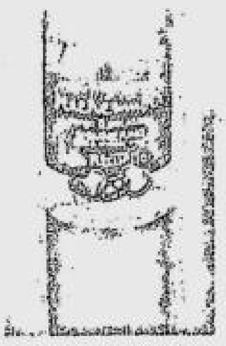


ROSY CHEEKS. Skin Alison Raffaele's Innerglow Translucent Cheek Color is a water-based gel that would keep your cheeks glowing even after a dip in the pool. Available at Beauty Bar Glorietta.

BELIEVE it or not, these real-looking fake nails can last for two weeks, even if you go swimming. Pro Impressions Designer Toe Nails, P295; Ms Petite Nails, P295; Designer Nails, P275. Available at Beauty Bar Glorietta.



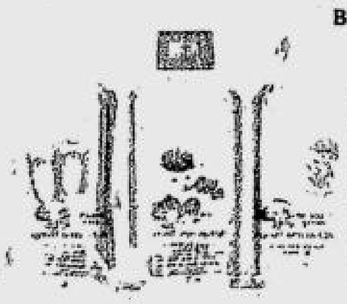
GET PRETTY with Sue Devitt. Two shades of eye shadow and 2 shades of lip gloss. Available at Beauty Bar Glorietta.



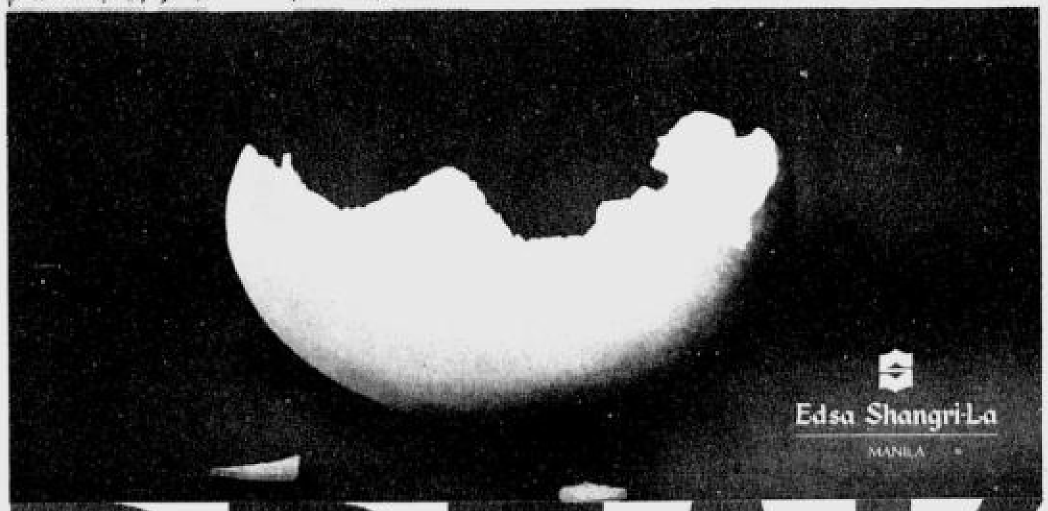
SHIMMER in the shower. Beachcomber Mango and Macadamia Shimmering Bath and Shower Cream. Available at Beauty Bar Glorietta.

COOL your heels with Body Shop's Peppermint Cooling Foot Spray, P385. Available at The Body Shop outlets nationwide.

ROMY HOMILLADA



LIGHT SCENTS for a hot summer. Bebe Scents in Slippers, Tutu and Teddy, P175 each. Available at Beauty Bar Glorietta.



EASTER

Edsa Shangri-La
MANILA

BREAK

Stay 2 nights and get the third night free.

Edsa Shangri-La's Easter package is indeed something to celebrate. Spend two nights in our Deluxe room for only Php13,074* and get the 3rd night FREE! We'll even throw in a buffet breakfast for two in our coffee shop on the first two days. Then get 20% off on the Easter Fair tickets, 30% off at the Valet Shop, 10% off in all restaurants**, plus free use of the Health Club and complimentary parking.
Package is valid from 15 March to 15 April 2005. At Edsa Shangri-La, restful nights are part of our Easter treat.
For reservations and inquiries, call (02) 636-9082 to 87 or e-mail reservations.esl@shangri-la.com.

Subject to availability and confirmed prior reservations. Open to local residents and expatriates residing in the Philippines; proof of identification will be requested at check-in. 3rd day does not include breakfast. Other room rates also available *Subject to 10% service charge **Restaurant discount not applicable between 25 to 27 March 2005. DOT Accreditation No. H-052-2004. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A3-163, Series of 2005.

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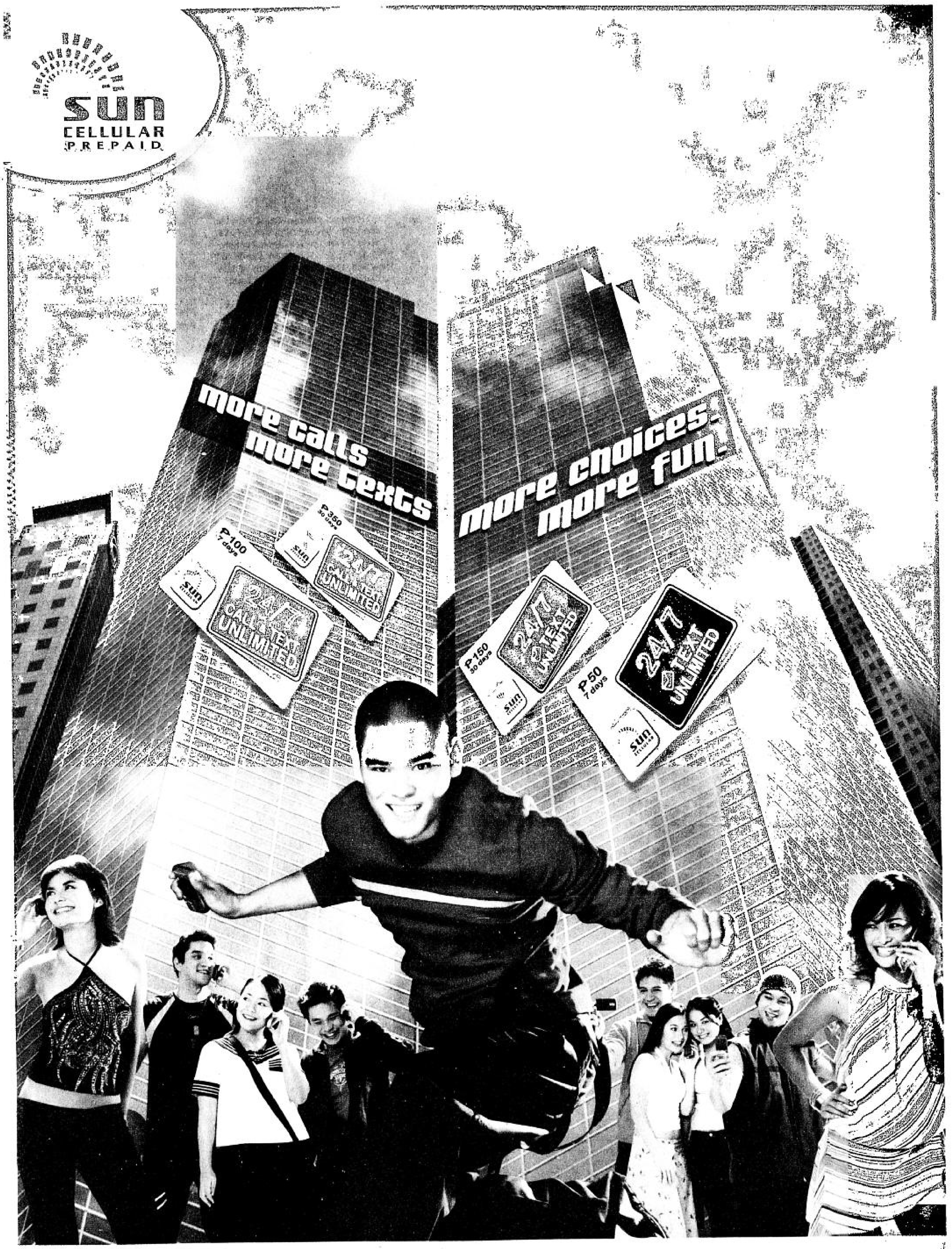
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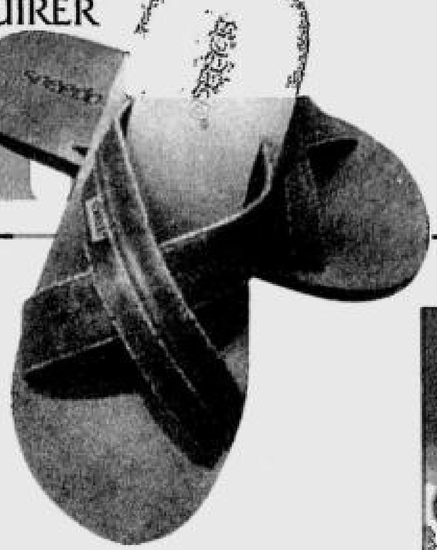


LEADER in leather. Speedo Kingscliff Slide Slippers, P999, available at Eastwood City, Libis

Summer survival manual

Styling and photos by JR Victorio

IT'S HOT, hot, hot!

Blame it on the sun. Gone are the cool and breezy days, and we're right smack in the hot and humid months.

But then again, why can't we be as hot and sizzling as the sun? The heat is no excuse for us guys to hide in the cool shades of home.

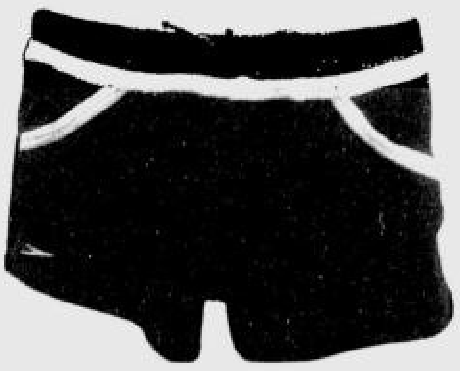
SUMMER/ G2

READY for the pool. Canadian bath towel, P353.75; Jockey Athletic Shirt, P224.75; Speedo Shorts, P99. All from Crossings Department Store

26-LITRE mutlisport pack with E-Vap plus suspension, airmesh shoulder harness, stowable hipbelt, front stash pocket, 3-point compression from North Face

SPEEDO Fastskin Velour beach towel, P1,350, available at Speedo Store Eastwood City, Libis

JR VICTORIO



CONSERVATIVE swimmer. Speedo Slipstream Aqua Shorts, P1,350, available at Speedo Store Eastwood City, Libis

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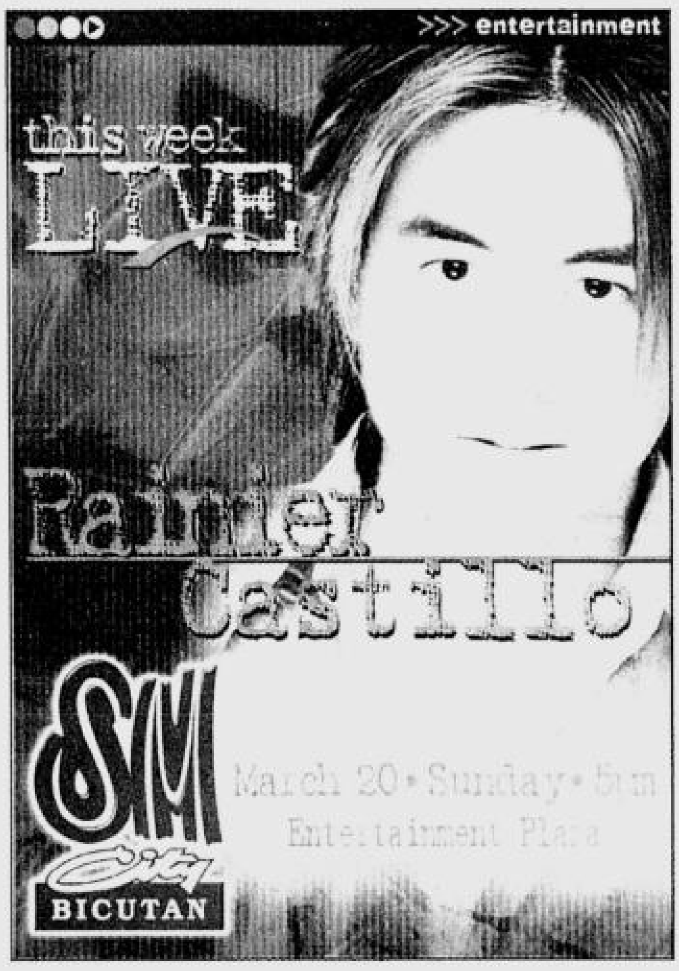

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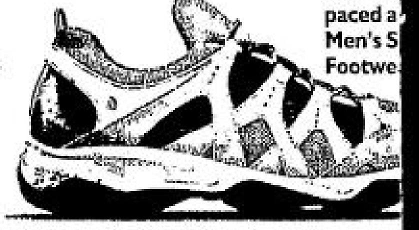

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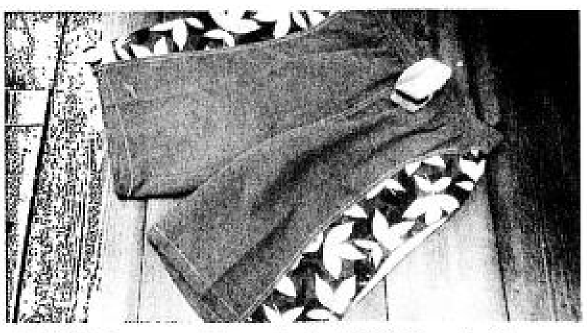
SKATER boys' must-have. Skechers 50185TPE

GREAT for outdoor activities. Skechers 50118LGNV



SPEEDO Camoway Watershorts, P2,000. Speedo Store Eastwood City, Libis

JR VICTORIO

SMART presents the 1st SWEEP
SMART WIRELESS ENGINEERING EDUCATION PROGRAM
INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Wesleyan University-Philippines Tops 2005 Search!

In March 2003, Smart Communications, Inc. introduced the Smart Wireless Engineering Education Program (SWEEP) to help raise the level of engineering education – particularly in the field of electronic and communications engineering. Since then, SWEEP has provided hands-on training and lectures on the latest developments in wireless technologies to more than 5000 students from a network of 43 partner-schools, with more similar partnerships to be formalized in 2005.

Recognizing the innate ingenuity of Filipino engineering students, Smart launched the 1st SWEEP Innovation and Excellence Awards in August 2004 to bolster the value of creativity and excellence in mobile communication technology among engineering students all over the country.

Open to SWEEP partner-schools nationwide, the SWEEP Awards required teams of students, mentored by a faculty member, to come up with wireless applications that would benefit the school or the community it serves. The awards committee received 61 entries and ten finalists emerged. From amongst this group, a panel of distinguished judges selected the best three mobile applications.

Smart Communications, Inc. proudly presents the winners of the 1st SWEEP Innovation and Excellence Awards held March 5 at Megatrade Hall 1, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City.

First Place
- Entry: Smart Kiosk
- School: Wesleyan University - Philippines
- Team Leader: Bryan D. Bariquit
- Team Member: James Bernard Siron
- Mentor: Manolito M. Alejandro

Second Place
- Entry: Automatic Reporting System
- School: Ateneo de Davao University
- Team Leader: Eugene Charles G. Grandeza
- Team Members: Brent P. de Vela, Philip Raymond Gripo
- Mentor: Engr. Eduardo Descalsota Jr.

Third Place
- Entry: SmartTrackerTM
- School: Ateneo de Manila University
- Team Leader: Florencio Rusty B. Punzalan Jr.
- Team Members: Marie Engelene J. Obien, Ian Cris A. Lomugdang, Benjamin F. Intal
- Mentors: Maria Leonora C. Guico, Fritz Ivy T. Lopez and Russel G. Que

Celebrating Filipino Innovation in Wireless Applications Development

Bulacan State University Wins 2005 PalaECEpan Championship!

In conjunction with the SWEEP Awards, a nationwide quiz bee called PalaECEpan was held. SWEEP partner schools fielded student teams to compete in regional eliminations, followed by national finals. The students demonstrated their excellence in retaining information gleaned from SWEEP trainings by answering questions on Signaling, Data Communication/TCP/IP, Transmission, Wireline Technologies, Wireless Technologies, and ECE laws. Nokia Networks and Smart are proud to present the 2005 PalaECEpan champions:

National Champion: Bulacan State University
Aris Fernando and Jefferson Padrique

Metro Manila Champion: Ateneo de Manila University
Adnan Abarro and Ian Cris Lomugdang

South Luzon Champion: Ateneo de Naga University
Julius Constante and Carlo Isidro Saballegue

North Luzon Champion: Bulacan State University
Aris Fernando and Jefferson Padrique

Visayas Champion: University of St. La Salle
Ryan Garaygay and Antonio Derramas

Mindanao Champion Ateneo de Davao University
Brent de Vela and Philip Raymond Gripo

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SPEEDO Super Tubes Boardshorts, P2,400, available at Speedo Store Eastwood City, Libis

JR VICTORIO

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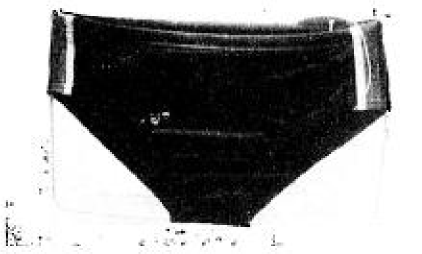

BOLD beach bum. Speedo Scorpio Sportsbrief, P999, available at Speedo Store Eastwood City, Libis

JR VICTORIO

2bU! PROMO

Win 'American I

LAST week, we said goodbye to the last four semi-finalists. Today, we're going to watch the 12 finalists in action. Will your favorite make it? Or will he or she be the first finalist to go?

To add even more fun to this season's "American Idol," 2bU! and Star World have been giving away exclusive "American Idol" premium items.

E-mail your answers to the following questions to americanidol_on_starworld@

yahoo.com.
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Week of M
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More than m

From page G4

telling me how a DJ should get his crowd dancing. It was inspiring to see a 24-year-old pied piper who has been touring around the world this whole year, using the gospel of techno and trance as his currency. "I really love what I do." And he's really good at it, if I may add.

Sometimes we have to be reminded about certain things to remember how much we love it. One time, I had a hosting job but I wasn't in the right mood for it (one of those days when you wake up on the wrong side of the bed.). It took the words of a wise man to get me going, he said, "Because I love what I do, once I get onstage, I know that there is so much life out there, and I draw from that life and give a whole lot of my own." That did it for me.

Applying it to the stuff that I do, I realize that even owning a club can also be a main attraction to draw in guests. Take Singapore's Zouk, who has been sweeping the Singapore Tourism awards for the past how many years. If partners **Erik Cua**, **Jon Herrera** and **Fern Aracama** and I can do that, then I think we will grow up to be very happy

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the process

Our true

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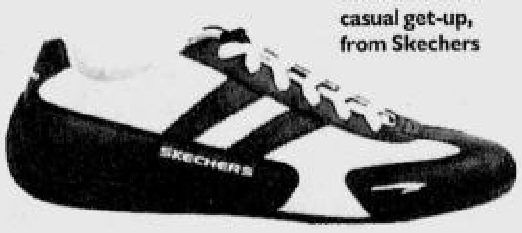
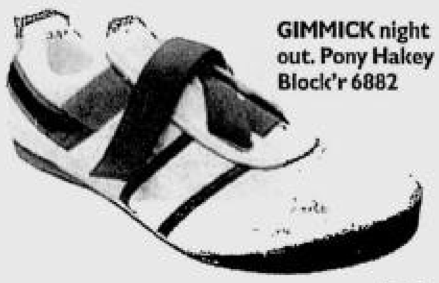
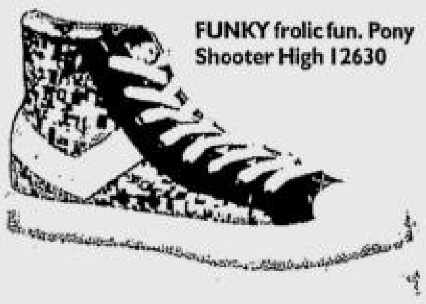
GREEN-MINDED. Pony Topstarr Blucher



PERFECT for a casual get-up, from Skechers



GIMMICK night out. Pony Hakey Block'r 6882



FUNKY frolic fun. Pony Shooter High 12630

ner survival manual

From page G1

to head for the beach or bask in the
oors.

at the scorching sun with these must-
s for all the boys of summer out
. Be it a simple stroll on the beach or
lventure trip up the mountains, these
tems will help you survive summer in

*r comments, email the author at
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HED after Tour de France champion
e Armstrong, this watch features a
user-interface with time, altimeter,
, alarm and high contrast yellow LCD
ay. P11,900

SUMMER classes. Big star move cap, P501.20; Remake Walking Shorts, P279.75; Big Star Basic Shirt, P647.50; Outland Sandals, P1395; Bag From Big Star. All from Crossings Department Store

SURPRISE your friends with these pop-out rubber slippers. Speedo Aussie Classic Thong Slippers, P799, available at Speedo Store Eastwood City, Libis

JR VICTORIO

dol' goodies!

The first five people
d correct answers will

arch 14, 2005
the title of Kelly Clark-
um?
the 2004 "American
-up who recently per-
United States national
to the UAW-Chrysler
gas Motor speedway?

3. Name the 12 finalists who will be pitted against each other for the "American Idol" title?

4. E! Online recently named Ryan Seacrest as ______________.

5. What was William Hung's famous quote?

Catch "American Idol" on Star World with direct off satellite telecasts on Wednesday and Thursday at 4 p.m. and primetime replays at 8 p.m.

Winners for Week of March 7:
1. Kristina Alpay
2. Kit Custodio
3. Jenesis Pinto
4. Rafael Gabriel
5. Judith Tiamsim

Winners can claim their prizes at Agatep Associates Inc. 16/F Robinsons Equitable Tower, ADB Ave. cor. Poveda St., Ortigas Center, Pasig City. Look for Ceejay or Ampy.

ore than the usual

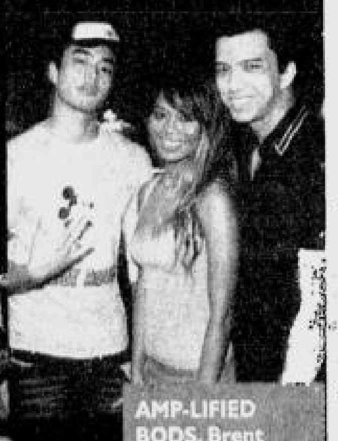
city's youth culture is also
that can get people to love
and attract more people in

colors

we have to stop comparing
vith countries that we can
We're not old enough to be
or rich enough to be like

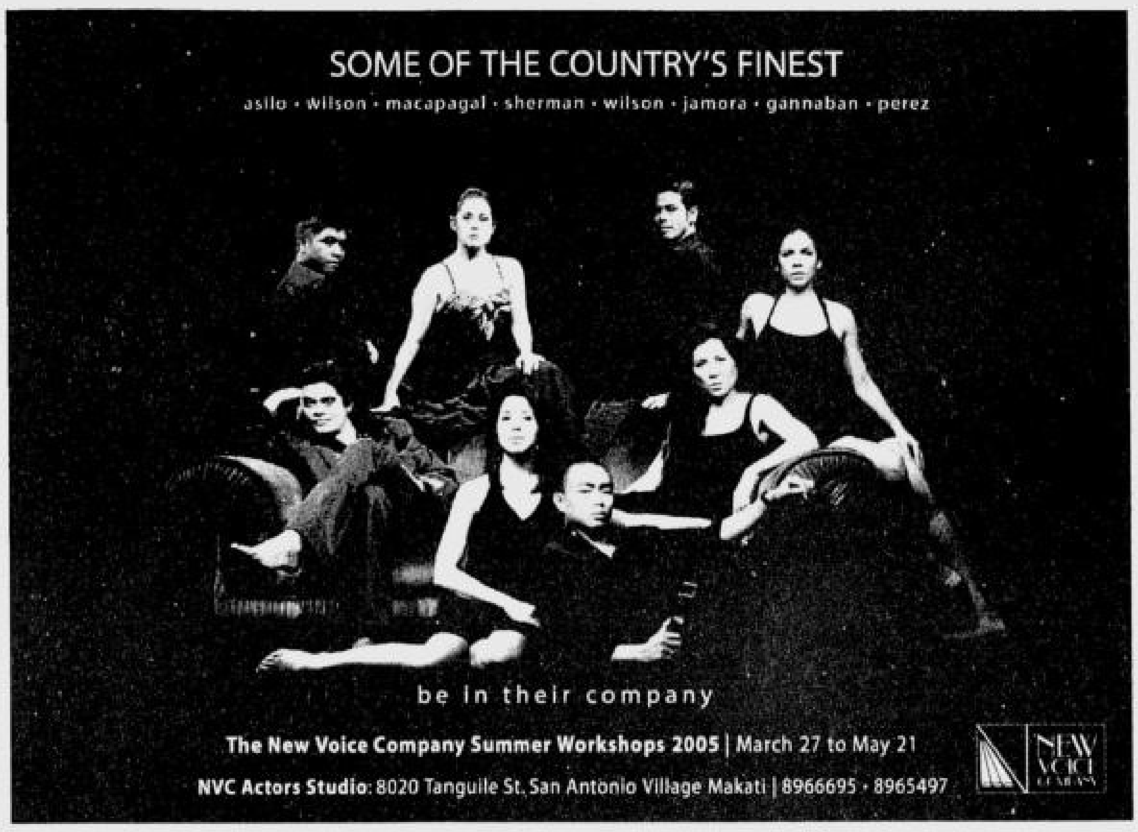
only wet and dry (I prefer
e) seasons. We don't have
sons (and I don't just mean
ain)—so we won't have the
ds and reds of autumn.
have the whites, blues and
ature, since we are perpetu-
nded by water and an abun-
oconut trees, among other
urces.
d, it is still us who will carry
's colors. Your clothes may
nded or expensive, but just
ukay-ukay or *tiangge*
you can carry and mix and
well, people will be able to
n from a different light and
ppreciate them as well.
's more than more than the

PARTY STYLE. Tatum Ancheta, Corinne Alegre and Patrick Ty



AMP-LIFIED BODS. Brent Javier, Tia Cordero and Marlon Morco

BIG FISH FARM. Manolet Dario, JP Bautista and Domini Primero



SOME OF THE COUNTRY'S FINEST

asilo • wilson • macapagal • sherman • wilson • jamora • gannaban • perez

be in their company

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my summer colors
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DEPARTMENT STORE
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BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ADDICT HAPPENING on the Embassy row

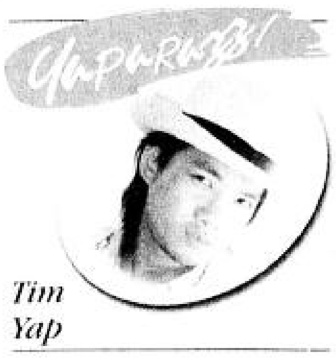
AMNESIA ARMY. Brian Cross loves Islas Pilipinas.

More than more than the usual

BIG FUN. Pixie Cheah and Ricky Draker

LOUNGERIE LOVE. Celine Lopez and Migs Rosales

FATALLY FEMME. Amanda Griffin and Bianca Zobel


Yapparazzi!

Tim Yap

MANILA needs a marketing campaign. I have so many friends from Manila, but hardly anyone ever goes there. More people have been to Cebu," my Australian friend casually observed while we were having lunch at Singapore's Changi airport.

Lately I've been living an existence similar to that of **Tom Hanks** in "The Terminal." No complaints, because I realize that life is, at least for now, a series of transits and waiting for boarding calls—and it gives me enough time to make my own tile mosaic fountains—but I digress.

My newfound friend, a travel writer, starts comparing the different marketing campaigns of countries to boost their tourism. Malaysia's Truly Asia, Amazing Thailand, Discover Hong Kong and Uniquely Singapore. All have been quite successful at drawing the crowds in—a box office hit, in tourism revenue. "What do you think of our campaign?" Here I was fishing for compliments for our tourism industry's efforts.

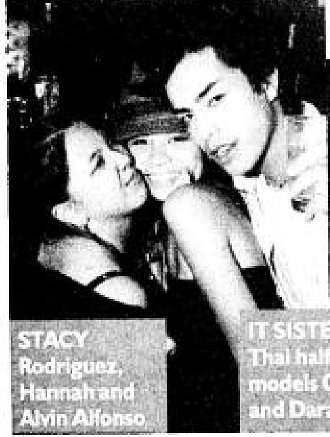
"What's that? 'More than the usual?' Of course it has to be, right? It has to be more than the usual for people to go," my friend said.

Okay, relax. He wasn't trying to start a fight. In fact he was saying all these from a very concerned and cautious travel writer's point of view. He thinks that the Philippines is beautiful, but observes that we really do need a marketing and PR campaign in order to raise interest for other people (let alone ourselves) to visit our beautiful shores.

I didn't think of it that way. For one, I was just more than happy to see that we do have a television campaign. For me, "Wow Philippines" is really wow Philippines! Because these 7,107 islands can make any true-blooded Pinoy proud indeed.

But where do you bring a visiting foreigner in Manila for a day? The mall? The park (what park?)? The museum? This question ran through my head when DJ **Brian Cross**, who's part-British and part-Spanish, and who spins music at legendary Ibiza club Amnesia, came to town last Saturday via the Big Fish route.

Pixie Cheah, the widow of legendary scene mover **Tuck,** is now in charge of foreign DJ bookings and she didn't know where to bring Brian when he said he wanted to go around the city to have photos taken. She ended up bringing him to Manila Bay for a sunset stroll along the boardwalk.


STACY Rodriguez, Hannah and Alvin Alfonso

IT SISTERS. Half Thai half Kiwi models Ornusa and Dara Cadness

AT THE VIP DEN. Ciara Sevilla, Marcel Crespo and JM Rodriguez

FIRST TIME RAVERS. Vicky Zubiri, Pops Fernandez, Kit Zobel and Anton San Diego at Embassy Super club

GODDESS on the party floor, Joanne Primero and Nicky Romero

TIM YAP FOREVER

FOREVER AND EVER. Yaparazzi, Marco and Jackie Antonio and Gino de la Paz

From Amnesia to Zouk

Okay, I can hear some tongues wagging—that's it? Surely we have more than that to show somebody from the Balearics. The next day he wanted to do some shopping, and I volunteered to be his tour guide—which is my favorite thing to do.

My friends know that I want secretary **Ace Durano's** job in the future. (But since I don't have that job yet, I'm starting with nightlife.) I wanted to take him to Greenhills, but I heard the shops are under renovation, or to Divisoria for that matter, if only I don't leave Embassy at sunrise.

Speaking of which, as I was in front of his booth watching him play it up for the crowd that night (so jampacked was the place that Embassy's lines reached Le Soufflé—yay!) and I remember him

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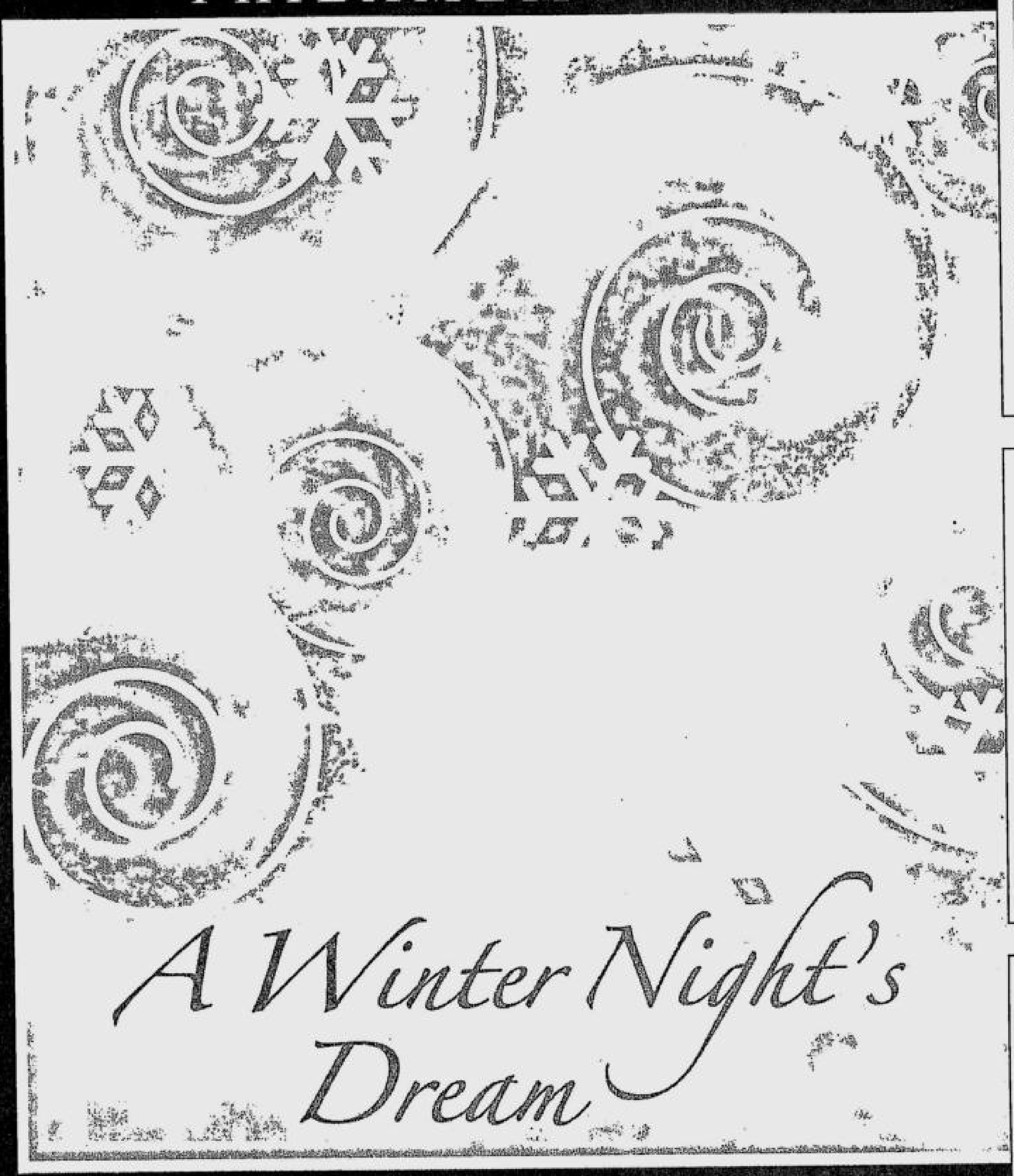
PHILAMLIFE 2005



A Winter Night's Dream

NATIONAL RECOGNITION PROGRAM

EDSA Shangri-la Manila
March 15-17, 2005

Sustainable
Going for Growth
Philamlife Agency Sales

* * *

THE PHILIPPINE AMERICAN LIFE AND GENERAL INSURANCE COMPANY

Hall of Fame

Philamlife honors the first recipient of the Hall of Fame award conferred to the agency manager who has built and developed a high performing sales team, demonstrated consistent growth and record-breaking new business production, and awarded Agency of the Year for ten consecutive years.

Elevated to Philamlife's highest award category in agency management

I am deeply honored to congratulate our 2004 Top Performers, who were responsible for another banner year for Philamlife. As a company awardee myself for more than 30 years, I am thrilled at being given this opportunity to cheer the accomplishments of my fellow hard working members of the sales force.

In my 35 years in Philamlife, when management conferred on me the honor of being the first-ever Hall of Fame awardee, I have accomplished what may seem to many as extra-ordinary or next to impossible - the record of continuous agency growth for 35 consecutive years.

Behind this achievement however, is no big formula for success but a simple personal strategy. From the start of my career up to the present, I have faithfully subscribed to the belief that I can accomplish any reasonable objective I have in mind, perhaps not in one sweeping act of achievement, but gradually over a sufficiently long period of time. To get through the hardest journey to success, I need only to take one step at a time, one notch higher each year.

It is the same perseverance and determination in our awardees that has helped them attain their objectives over the years. This sets them apart from ordinary producers.

Again, congratulations!

JOSE ISAGANI F. ANTONIO
Senior Agency Manager
- 2004 HALL OF FAME AWARDEE

Greetings to the Philippine American Life and General Insurance Company as it celebrates its National Recognition Program.

Amidst the triumphs and festivities of this affair, please be reminded that you, the professionals of the life insurance industry are being called to do your part in upholding the interests of our nation. Indeed, as the financial sector gains more public attention, there is a compelling urgency for you to work harder not only to further the growth of your sales but more importantly, to effectively send across the message of this industry's credibility and reliability. Were that to be achieved, then public confidence would be reestablished and you would have given your best contribution not only to Philamlife but to the insurance sector.

Having shared your best to this industry, I extend my congratulations to Philamlife's top producers for 2004. Your feat is truly commendable and a worthy inspiration among your peers.

BENJAMIN S. SANTOS
Insurance Commissioner

While 2004 may have been a difficult year for the Philippines, I am pleased to have seen the commitment of our agency force as strong as ever. You have responded positively to the numerous challenges in the Philippines and your valuable contributions have ensured Philamlife's continued leadership in the life insurance industry. Congratulations on your strong performance in 2004.

I commend the work of our agency force, especially our National Awardees. Thank you for your dedication and loyalty. I am proud that you continue our long history of serving policy holders and their families ably and honorably. As you serve the best interests of your clients, you assist in the important work of mobilizing long term savings to spur economic development so greatly needed in the Philippines.

May you persevere in your agency sales careers and find fulfillment in serving both your fellow Filipinos and your country.

MAURICE R. GREENBERG
Chairman & Chief Executive Officer
American International Group, Inc. (AIG)
Chairman of the Board
Philamlife

The National Recognition Program celebrates the best of Philamlife's agency force. We honor Awardees who continue to give their best to the country through their important role of helping individuals and families plan, insure and invest.

All those we honor are sales professionals in the best tradition of Philamlife. Our Awardees represent all the corners of this country and many backgrounds. They are young professionals, retired teachers, busy mothers and determined students. They exude an all-consuming passion to excel and are possessed with a sense of purpose that prompts them to work 'round the clock' and to travel through week-day lunch time traffic in all sorts of weather to provide clients and their families with the best products and services.

In the fifty-seven year history of this great company, Philamlife has depended on the committed action and steadfast character of its agents to spread the good news of insurance, and to maintain Philamlife's position as the undisputed life insurance industry leader.

My congratulations to Philamlife's 2005 National Awardees! Your dedication and passion continue to make your Philam Family proud!

JOSE L. CUISIA, JR.
President & Chief Executive Officer

The year 2004 went down in our history as another year of milestones. We surpassed Php 2 Billion in first-year premiums — another first in the Philippine life insurance industry. This feat was achieved in grand fashion as we registered a respectable level of growth amidst a turbulent economy beset with much uncertainty.

This is why I consider it an honor and a privilege to congratulate each of you, our beloved awardees, for a job spectacularly done. All of you overcame countless obstacles and pursued your goals with persistence and determination. You epitomized the ideals and traditions of Philamlife and you fully embraced the nobility of your profession. The recognition you will receive will never be able to match the excellent service you extend to your clientele.

Mabuhay kayong lahat!

REX MA. A. MENDOZA
Executive Vice President-Sales, Marketing & Training

As we have done so with every year that this great Company of ours has treaded, today we come together to celebrate yet another period punctuated with success. A triumphant ending to a challenging year that has given fruit to major milestones in Philamlife's sales history.

Congratulations to all our 2005 Philamlife awardees! It is without question that behind every Philamlife sales achievement is the pooled effort of our agency force, highlighted by the unrelenting achievers we give honor to today. Our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude goes out to each one of you for your dedication to our goals and for continuously upholding the Company's vision of service striving to put a Philamlife policy in every Filipino home.

As we poise ourselves for yet another exciting year already unfolding before us, let us, like true winners, capitalize on our high spirits and face the challenges before us with the optimism, boundless energy, and thirst for achievement necessary for continued success.

Once again, congratulations!

ARIEL G. CANTOS
Senior Vice President & Chief Agency Officer

PHILAM LIFE

Associates OF THE Year

Career Agent Category

Philamlife's Top Career Agents who achieved the honor and distinction of being the Company's most productive Career Agents for Recognition Year 2005.

They stand out among a field of more than 8,000 Career Agents nationwide.

AGENT OF THE YEAR

GUEI TAY GI
Tan Associates
TOP NATIONAL

EVANGELINE S. GARCIA
Rizal-Maunahan Agency
1st RUNNER-UP
TOP PROVINCIAL

LOURDES M. DEL MUNDO
Del Mundo Associates
2nd RUNNER-UP
TOP MANILA

ANTONINA S. SOLOMON
Salientes-Gonzalez Associates
3rd RUNNER-UP

MA. ELENA G. ASTURIAS
Del Mundo Associates
4th RUNNER-UP

Unit Manager Category

Philamlife's Top Unit Managers who achieved the honor and distinction of being the Company's most productive Unit Managers for Recognition Year 2005.

UNIT MANAGER OF THE YEAR

SEGUNDINA O. TAN
Tan Associates
TOP NATIONAL

MA. ZENAIDA N. ANTONIO
Antonio Associates
1st RUNNER-UP
TOP MANILA

LUCILA H. KIERULF
Del Mundo Associates
2nd RUNNER-UP

MA. THERESA L. SOLON, *LUTCF*
Del Mundo Associates
3rd RUNNER-UP
TOP PROVINCIAL

KARLA M. CAPILI
Capili Associates
4th RUNNER-UP

Agency Manager Category

Philamlife's Top Agency Managers who achieved the honor and distinction of being the Company's most productive Agency Managers for Recognition Year 2005.

AGENCY MANAGER OF THE YEAR

LOURDES M. DEL MUNDO
Del Mundo Associates
TOP NATIONAL

VERONICA S. GONZALEZ
Salientes-Gonzalez Associates
1st RUNNER-UP
TOP MANILA

ROSARIO C. SALIENTES
Salientes-Gonzalez Associates
1st RUNNER-UP
TOP MANILA

JUAN A. TAN
Tan Associates
2nd RUNNER-UP

JOHN P. MATA, JR.
INV-Mata Agency
3rd RUNNER-UP
TOP PROVINCIAL

RUBEN E. FALAGUE
Laguna-Falague Agency
4th RUNNER-UP

CHAIRMAN'S CABINET

This exclusive honor club, dedicated to Philamlife's Chairman, Maurice R. Greenberg, belongs to the top 15% of Philamlife's outstanding Agency Leaders.

AGENCY CATEGORY

LOURDES M. DEL MUNDO
Del Mundo Associates

VERONICA S. GONZALEZ
Salientes-Gonzalez Associates

ROSARIO C. SALIENTES
Salientes-Gonzalez Associates

DIRECT UNIT CATEGORY

VERONICA S. GONZALEZ
Salientes-Gonzalez Associates

ROSARIO C. SALIENTES
Salientes-Gonzalez Associates

SEGUNDINA O. TAN
Tan Associates

LOURDES M. DEL MUNDO
Del Mundo Associates

MA. ZENAIDA N. ANTONIO
Antonio Associates

REYNALDO N. MORTEL
Mortel Associates

RUBEN E. FALAGUE
Laguna-Falague Agency

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

In the tradition of excellence, these Agency Leaders have distinguished themselves with exceptional First Year Commission Income for Recognition Year 2005.

AGENCY CATEGORY

JUAN A. TAN
Tan Associates

JOHN P. MATA, JR.
INV-Mata Agency

RUBEN E. FALAGUE
Laguna-Falague Agency

JULIUS A. REYES
Nueva-Reyes Agency

REYNALDO N. MORTEL
Mortel Associates

PRISCILO E. COMIA
Batangas-Comia Agency

MELBA L. TAN
Cebu-Tan Agency

CRISA G. NICDAO
Nicdao Associates

ERIC G. NICDAO
Nicdao Associates

SERAPIO G. MAUNAHAN
Rizal-Maunahan Agency

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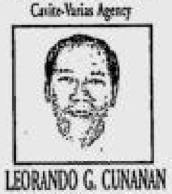
Tongko Associates

CECILIA A. MELENDRES
Melendres Associates

ISMAEL L. MELENDRES
Melendres Associates

AURORA M. MATURINO
Bataan-Maturino Agency


LEORANDO G. CUNANAN
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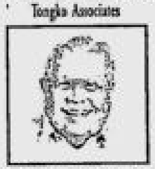
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Espiritu Associates

NANCY R. BAUTISTA
Espiritu Associates

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Tongko Associates

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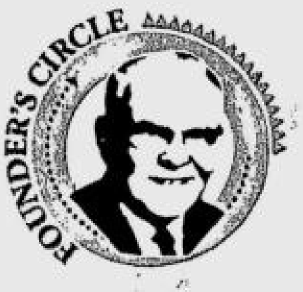
PHILAM LIFE



A five-time member of the Chairman's Board earns the rank and privilege to be elevated to Philamlife's highest honor club.

This club extols the memory of Philamlife's Founder and First President, Earl Caroll.

These are the true professionals who represent excellence and commitment.

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Del Mundo Associates

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Salientes-Gonzales Associates

MA. ELENA G. ASTURIAS
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LUCILA H. KIERULF
Del Mundo Associates

LOURDES E. BERNARDO
Bernardo Associates

SHIRLEY L. CO
Tan Associates

CHAN SIU ENG
Tan Associates

JACINTA Y. PHOA
Tan Associates

YOLANDA A. MORTEL, *LUTCF*
Mortel Associates

ANUNCIACION C. BIROG
Del Mundo Associates

NANCY R. BAUTISTA
Espiritu Associates

RODOLFO M. MALLARI
Pampanga-Del Rosario Agency

NILDA C. UY
Del Mundo Associates

CORAZON KI ANG
CK Ang Associates

SALUD P. CAPILI
Capili Associates

CHAIRMAN'S BOARD

This exclusive honor club, dedicated to Philamlife's Chairman, Maurice R. Greenberg, belongs to the top 15% of Philamlife's outstanding Career Agents.

They are the true pacesetters of the agency force who exemplify growth and strength, characteristics of intensely dedicated men and women.

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Rizal-Manahan Agency

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Mortel Associates

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Salientes-Gonzales Associates

MARICHELE C. GREGORIO
Cebu-Tan Agency

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Ramos Associates

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IQA
INTERNATIONAL QUALITY AWARD

The mark of a career underwriter is exemplified by this worldwide symbol of excellence. Membership to this club is measured by persistency --- the number of clients who keep their policies in-force for many years. Persistent business is the seal of a true professional.

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26 years

SHIRLEY L. CO
24 years

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21 years

CORAZON KI ANG
11 years

ROMEO N. MACASAET IV
5 years

FERDINAND S. CRUZ
5 years

MA. LETICIA G. ALLADO
4 years

LUCILA R. OCAMPO
4 years

THERESITAS N. PANOPIO
3 years

MA. VIVIENNE SOLON-LATONIO
3 years

ELSIE G. GALUEGO
2 years

ADELAIDE H. YAP
2 years

PATRICIA A. SARDALLA, *FLMI*
2 years

ANGELITA T. MANDANI
2 years

MA. LUZ S. VENCIO
2 years

MA. EDITHA S. PEÑAFLOR
2 years

PATRICIA W. YAM, *LUTCF*
1 year

REBECCA A. SUAREZ
1 year

ERLINDA U. COMIA
1 year

AMELIA E. ATANACIO
1 year

CONCHITA K. CASTILLO
1 year

DULCISIMA B. ESCASINAS
1 year

PAMELA P. RECLA
1 year

JUSTO O. MERJILLA
1 year

JOSE ELMER C. JAMORA
1 year

ISABELITA S. CASTOR
1 year

Premier AGENTS CLUB

This elite club recognizes distinguished members for their superior performance in quality business, exceptional first year production and professional agency values.

They stand as vanguards, leading the field in exceptional professionalism --- such is the hallmark of a premier agent of the premier Company.

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Tan Associates

CHAN SIU ENG
Tan Associates

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Del Mundo Associates

ANTONINA S. SOLOMON
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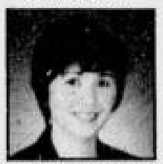
GUEI TAY GI
Tan Associates

LUCILA H. KIERULF
Del Mundo Associates

THERESITAS N. PANOPIO
Salientes-Gonzales Associates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INV-Mata Agency

EVANGELINE S. GARCIA
Rizal-Manahan Agency

GOLD

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Tan Associates

CORAZON KI ANG
CK Ang Associates

NANCY R. BAUTISTA
Espiritu Associates

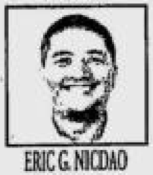
NILDA C. UY
Del Mundo Associates

MA. EDITHA S. PEÑAFLOR
Antonio Associates

IRENE B. VILLENA
Cavite-Medrano Agency

NORA H. CRISOSTOMO
Antonio Associates

REYNOLD A. GAN
Gan Associates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Nicdao Associates

NANCY S. UY
Del Mundo Associates

ELENITA V. BELIGANIO
Bulacan-Maturino Agency

MARY GRACE L. SILVA
Del Mundo Associates

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Panay-Altavas Agency

NORMITA G. VENERACION
Bulacan-Pagaduan Agency

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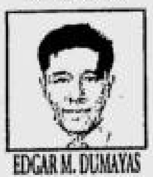
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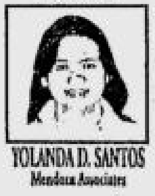
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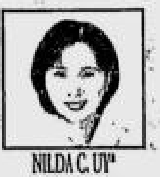
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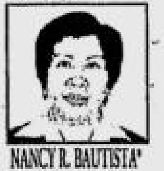
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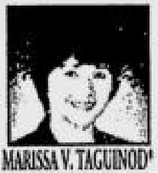
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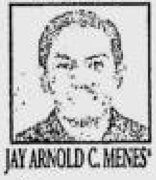
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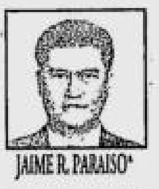
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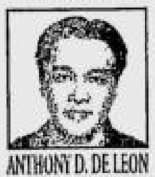
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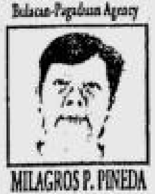
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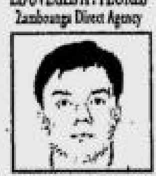
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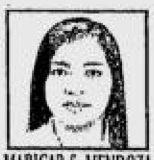
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MARIO S. BUTAD
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AGENCY CATEGORY

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UNIT MANAGER CATEGORY

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CREDIT LIFE LEGACY AWARD

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Davao-Huyatid Agency

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VERONICA S. GONZALEZ
Salientes-Gonzales Associates

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NATIONAL

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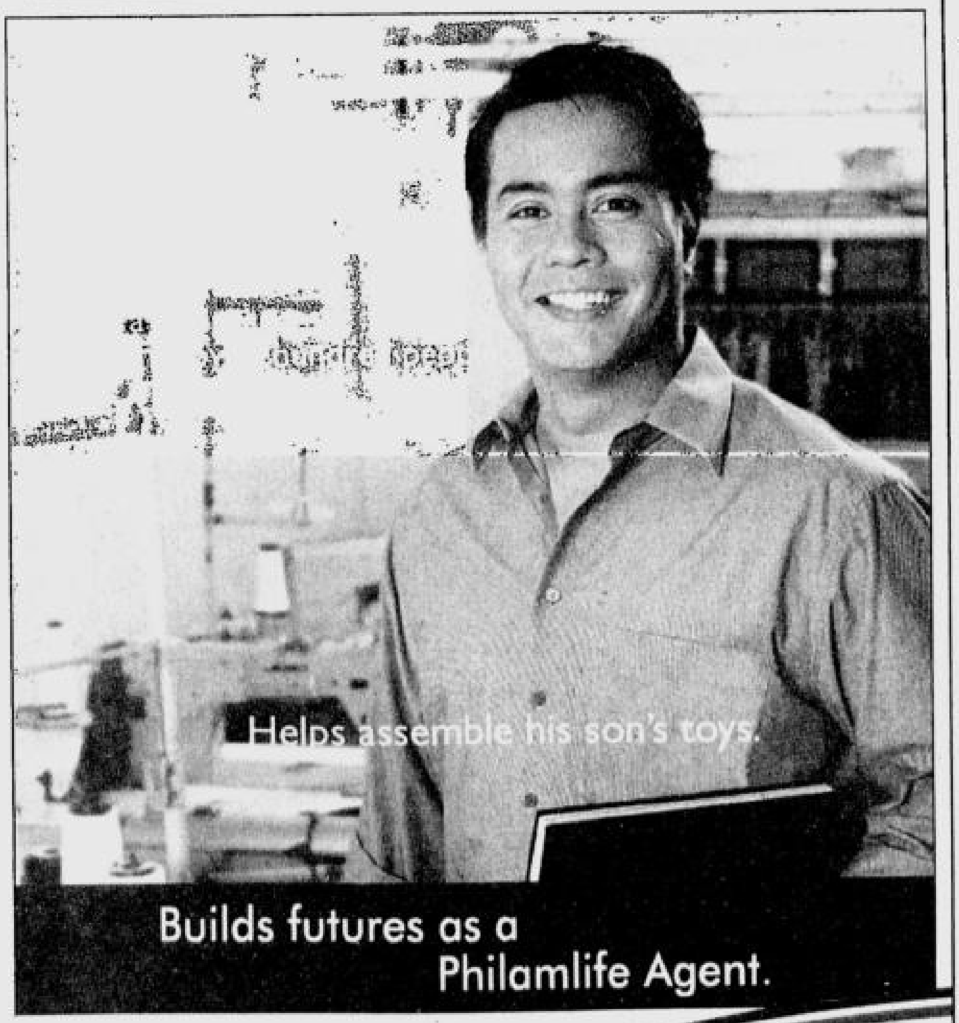
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CAVITE-IGAA AGENCY
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Tel Nos. (049) 411-26-95 / 714-93-15

CELERINA N. SILLANO
L.D. ROQUE ASSOCIATES
Tel. Nos. 807-43-15 / 85077-44

MERLINDA P. TAN
NICDAO ASSOCIATES
Tel. Nos. 645-85-45 / 645-74-37

ROSA L. TAN
CUASO ASSOCIATES
Tel. No. 350-37-39

ARIZALETA G. TIAMSON
TAN ASSOCIATES
Tel. Nos. 247-48-88

ISABELITA T. VASQUEZ
ARDIDON ASSOCIATES
Tel Nos 697-53-96 / 650-70-69

EMMA A. YUHICO
MELENDRES ASSOCIATES
Tel. Nos. 750-32-81 / 754-38-76

PROVINCIAL

RICARDO G. ANGEL
NORTH LUZON–COSTES AGENCY
Tel. Nos. (075) 522-82-83 / 522-79-32

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Tel. Nos. (034) 433-34-21 / 433-34-22

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Tel. Nos (034) 433-34-21 / 433-34-21

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Tel. No. (082) 221-24-84

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Tel. No. (043) 756-16-18

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INV-MATA AGENCY
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Tel. No. (064) 421-72-22

ROEL C. NABOS
DAVAO-EVANGELISTA AGENCY
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Tel. Nos. (044) 766-31-99 / 673-44-26

LUCILA F. PANELA
BULACAN-SEBASTIAN AGENCY
Tel No (044) 791-52-84

SUSANITA S. PESASICO
ANTONIO ASSOCIATES
Tel. Nos. 807-43-43 / 807-43-66

EDITHA J. PRADO
DAVAO-HUYATID AGENCY
Tel. No. (082) 221-24-84

EULOGIA T. QUITOR
COTABATO-JEREZ AGENCY
Tel. Nos. (083) 552-40-20 / 552-32-92

MILDRED R. QUIZAN
BACOLOD-SY AGENCY
Tel. Nos. (034) 433-34-21 / 433-34-22

PAMELA P. RECLA
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Philamlife Equity Fund NAVPU
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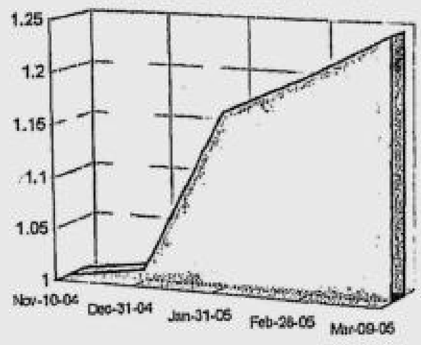

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PHILAM LIFE
Are You Ready for Life?

www.philam.com

ISAGANI ANTONIO ASSOCIATES -

BEYOND THE HALL OF FAME...

New Vision, New Horizon

The elevation of the Antonio Associates to the first-ever Hall of Fame after 32 consecutive years of phenomenal growth and 11 consecutive years as Philamlife's Top National Agency clearly marks the agency's accomplishments in agency building. But as we celebrate our success, we are determined to carry on our vision. We will continue to expand our horizon and explore new avenues of success in a climate of seemingly endless change.

Surely, there is life after the Hall of Fame. More Filipinos to provide life insurance protection, more markets to penetrate and more new agents to develop.

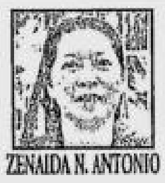
In 2004, many of our people met the production challenges they have set to accomplish. Those who achieved formidable sales milestones are featured below. They are the exceptional production heroes and agency leaders in 2004, our first year as a Hall of Fame Awardee.

JL MENDOZA SALES EXCELLENCE AWARD

The Associate of the Year whose excellent performance in 2004 in new business production, persistency and growth achievement over 2003, exemplified the highest standards of sales excellence -- a legacy of our dearly departed MDRT Life Member, JEANETTE L. MENDOZA

EDITHA S. PEÑAFLOR

MILLION DOLLAR ROUND TABLE QUALIFIERS



ZENAIDA N. ANTONIO

EDITHA S. PEÑAFLOR

TERESITA V. ROMASANTA

CONSOLACION C. BLANCO

SYLVIA O. GAGTO

PREMIER AGENTS

EDITHA S. PEÑAFLOR
Premier Gold

NORA H. CRISOSTOMO
Premier Gold

LOURDES C. OLIVEROS
Premier Gold

ANTONELLA A. ALMEIDA
Premier Silver

AIDA C. MATTI
Premier Silver

PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE AWARDEES

ZENAIDA N. ANTONIO

EDITHA S. PEÑAFLOR

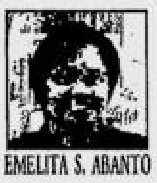
NORA H. CRISOSTOMO

TERESITA V. ROMASANTA

ANTHONY D. DE LEON

LOURDES C. OLIVEROS

CONSOLACION C. BLANCO



EMELITA S. ABANTO

ANTONELLA A. ALMEIDA

AIDA C. MATTI

CECILIA U. BARNUEVO

EVELYN S. MENDOZA

SYLVIA M. EVANGELISTA

PHILAM LIFE
Are You Ready for Life?

QUALITY BUSINESS AWARDEES

EDITHA S. PEÑAFLOR

ISABELITA S. CASTOR

ROOKIE AGENTS OF THE YEAR

TERESITA V. ROMASANTA

MARCELO N. ESTRADA

RUFINA T. BELISARIO

HERMA B. FORMELOZA

AUREA M. SALAZAR

LIEZEL E. FORMELOZA

UNIT MANAGERS OF THE YEAR

ZENAIDA N. ANTONIO

GLICERIA D. DE LEON

EDUARDO A. FORDAN

ADELAIDA C. HERNANDEZ

CESAR M. OÑATE

CARMELITA N. AQUINO

ORLANDO T. ABANTO

EDERLINA T. OLEGARIO

AGENCY AWARDEES OF THE YEAR

FLORA L. PACAYRA
VIRGILIO V. HERNANDEZ
AMELIA C. RONQUILLO
ROSALINIE M. DE PADUA
JUNE R. NERY
ELENA D. ENRIQUEZ
TERESITA S. MANALO
JOCELYN P. SECRETARIO
LIZA A. MALABANAN
LUCILA A. BASCON
OFELIA J. VILLANUEVA
ELVIRA J. MILLAN

TERESITA C. SALDUA
FAITH E. ESTRABO
AVELINA I. CADORNIGA
ANNIE G. CAPULLA
CATALINA S. SEDUTAN
ARMANDO O. ORDOÑEZ
CONCEPCION G. AQUINO
CORAZON B. BARANGAN
MELANIE L. FETALVERO
DELIA C. DE LOS SANTOS
JOSELINO J. FERNANDO

ANTONIO ASSOCIATES
MORE THAN THREE DECADES OF CONTINUING GROWTH
THE FIRST-EVER PHILAMLIFE'S HALL OF FAME AWARDEE
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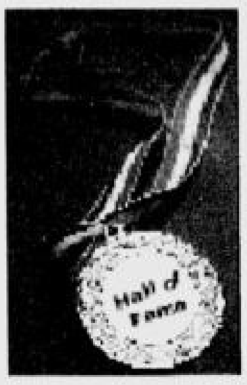
MADRIGAL BUSINESS PARK, ALABANG, MUNTINLUPA CITY
TEL. NOS. 807-4314 & 809-4351

AGENCY MILESTONES LEADING TO HALL OF FAME AWARD



1973	**We started operation as a small agency**
1974	We made a market shift: Salary Allotment
1976	We moved out of the Philamlife Bldg.
1977	**We made our First Million Pesos in FYPI**
1979	We opened our first satellite office at BF Homes Paranaque Commercial Center
1981	We created SA task forces to penetrate SA franchises

We can describe the first 10 years of the agency as the introduction year when sales and income were slow but nevertheless sure and steady. In fact, there was never a year in the first decade that we did not grow.

1983	**We ended the year as Top Agency of Manila**
1983	We made another market decision: Regular Business
1985	We opened our own training development center
1986	**We survived the Edsa Revolution by registering growth at end of year**
1987	We positioned ourselves in Makati s CBD by acquiring a condo unit at Legaspi Village
1988	We made a market addition: Corporate Sales
1989	We moved our BF Homes office to the Alabang Business Park
1990	We opened our 3rd satellite office in San Pedro, Laguna as an entry point to CALABARZON
1991	We opened our East Avenue office to serve our QC agents and clients
1992	We computerized our recording, training programs and proposal generation system

The second decade was characterized by rapid growth in sales and income.

Inspired by being the No. 1 Manila Agency, we embarked on massive market development activities, expansion of territories and initiated computerization of agency programs to cope with the demands of a growing sales force.

We started to penetrate the high end market of the South and growing business environment of CALABARZON.

1993	**We ended the year as Philamlife TOP National Agency**
1994	**We launched our Outreach Program that aims to benefit selected beneficiaries**
1995	We embarked on leafleting, adopt-a-market prospecting strategies
1997	We put up booths in schools, malls, supermarkets to generate leads for sales and recruitment
1999	We opened our 1st business center at SM Southmall, Las Pinas City
2000	We opened our 2nd business center at SM City Bacoor, Cavite
2000	**We gave birth to a new agency (Roque Agency), earning a new status: Senior Agency**
2001	We opened our 3rd business center at SM City Manila
2002	We started our prov'l operation with the opening of 4th business center at Pacific Mall in Legazpi City
2002	We brought forth another new agency from our ranks of leaders: Bernardo Agency
2003	We launched our agency website
2003	We opened our 5th business center at Festival Supermall in Alabang, Muntinlupa City
2003	We opened our 6th business center at SM City Lucena,
2004	**Philamlife conferred its first-ever "Hall of Fame" award to Antonio Associates**

We began the 3rd decade of our agency as the No. 1 Philamife Agency nationwide.

The period saw the appointment of two new agencies from the ranks of leaders of the Antonio Associates. It was also in this period that we registered our ONE HUNDRED MILLION PESOS of FYPI.

As we end the decade, Philamlife management announced the elevation of our agency to the first-ever HALL OF FAME category. The award was formally given during the National Recognition Program celebration of the company in 2004.

PHILAM LIFE

Are You Ready for Life?

Coming Full Circle at 50

What can be more fulfilling than realizing one's lifetime dream at one's 50th year anniversary? It's the sweetest taste of success for Philamlife's Senior Agency Manager Lourdes "Lulu" Del Mundo—to see Del Mundo Associates at its peak performance ranking number one among agencies and garnering this year's most number of awardees, which include a record number of 16 qualifiers for the Million Dollar Round Table, and 13 awardees for the Premiere Agent's Club, two of whom were platinum awardees.

LOURDES M. DEL MUNDO, *LUTCF*
MDRT-COURT OF THE TABLE
TOP AGENCY MANAGER 2004
PREMIER PLATINUM

"We've come full circle," says Lulu. "From the time I started my career as an insurance agent 50 years ago, I already have a dream of making it to the top. I say we've come full circle because that dream is finally realized. And I may say it's an exhilarating experience."

For those who may not know it, Ms. Lulu Del Mundo is among Philamlife's top agency managers. Her unblemished track record as agency manager speaks highly of her person and has earned her respect from clients and colleagues. For many years, she has constantly ranked second or third top manager, almost always just a notch away from the top plum. "This crossed my mind all the time," she intimates. "Parang always the bridesmaid, never the bride." She belts out a laugh. "But I took it as a perennial challenge to always give my best. Then would you believe it? Exactly on my 50th year, we became number one."

MILLION DOLLAR ROUND TABLE (MDRT)
(Clockwise from Top Left) Luisito Laudico, Victor Abrenica, Mary Grace Silva, Alma Llorente, Nancy Uy, Maria Luz Vencio, Rossana Uy, Eden Jalosjos, Maria Antonietta Del Mundo, Edgar Bartolata, Lucila Kierulf, Nida Uy, Maria Elena Asturias, Zenaida Palmes, Anunciacion Birog

PREMIER AGENTS CLUB
(Clockwise from Top Left) Alma Llorente, Maria Luz Vencio, Lucila Kierulf, Mary Grace Silva, Nancy Uy, Rossana Uy, Edgar Bartolata, Eden Jalosjos, Maria Antonietta Del Mundo, Nida Uy, Ms Lourdes M. Del Mundo, Maria Elena Asturias, Nancy Tan

Not a walk in the park

The sweet fruit of success couldn't have come at a better time. It was like a fruit that was ripe for the picking. But Ms Del Mundo was quick to say the achievement did not come easy. It was the culmination of many years of trials, struggles, and challenges. "It's not a walk in the park. There are situations which you cannot control, for example the economic condition. But in spite of that, you have to overcome all the humps along the way. I would not say I came out unscathed, still I made good during difficult times."

PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE AWARDEES
(Clockwise from Top Left) Vivienne Solon, Rosanna Uy, Alma Llorente, Maria Luz Vencio, Mary Grace Silva, Edgar Bartolata, Victor Abrenica, Eden Jalosjos, Maria Antonietta Del Mundo, Priscilla Rivero, Nancy Tan, Salvacion Contreras

FOUNDERS' CIRCLE
(L-R) Lucila Kierulf, Anunciacion Birog, Maria Elena Asturias, Ms. Lourdes M. Del Mundo, Nida Uy

TOP UNIT MANAGER IN 2004
Maria Theresa Solon

LIFE & QUALIFYING MEMBER, MDRT
Maria Elena Asturias

Success Tips

Asked about her formula for success, Ms Del Mundo shared the following tips:

1) ***Be a good role-model.*** Ms Del Mundo asserts that the key to sustain profitable growth is to have a very successful team. To have such a team would require a good manager-agent relationship. "People come and go," explains Ms Del Mundo, "but those who stay are those who share your vision and your values. They will always look up to you as their role-model so it is important to take note how you conduct yourself. I value professional ethics. I don't say anything that I cannot stand for."

2) ***Be high–touch.*** Taking inspiration from Mr. Bob Hughes (one of the speakers in the 10th anniversary of LUAP in Singapore), who said that it is good to be 'high-touch than high-tech,' Ms Del Mundo emphasized the importance of establishing a personal relationship with clients. "Many times, it's so difficult for us to approach high-profile executives because of the cordon sanitaire (you have to get through their secretaries!). But once you have established a personal relationship with them, it becomes easy to invite them to break bread with you. I have a client who is a very busy businessman. We invited him to the Tower Club to give him the cash benefits of his policy (after 20 years). Despite his hectic schedule, he came to dinner and we talked for hours like long time friends. He even signed up for a new policy."

PRESIDENT'S CABINET
(L-R) Nelia Laudico, Lucila Kierulf, Maria Theresa Solon, Maria Elena Asturias, Nida Uy

EAGLE AWARDEES
(Clockwise from Top left) Douglasia Canuel, Maria Theresa Teves, Alicia Leoncio, Marivic Shinohara, Rizalina De Guzman, Ana Viola Laquian, Madeline Dumlao, Estela Tan, Evangeline Reyes, Jennifer Almoguerra

3) ***Be prepared when meeting a client.*** When meeting a client, Ms Del Mundo makes sure she has all the documents she needs— proposals, application forms, etc. She even does her own research and one time found out that her client has a forgotten policy which had already matured. Informing the client that he has a policy which was forgotten over the years became a good surprise gift. Also, coming to a meeting with all the necessary documents adds to the agent's credibility and lessens questions and misunderstandings.

4) ***Be honest and sincere.*** Ms Del Mundo got the biggest surprise of her life when one of her clients signed up for a new policy and demanded the face amount be raised to P50 million more. She said, "I was telling my client not to buy this much. Why pay for so much when all you need is this? Clients appreciate if you offer them products that best suit their needs. A product with a high premium isn't always the best choice."

UNIT MANAGERS
(Clockwise from Top Left) Reynaldo Birog, Norma Magpantay, Zenaida Palmes, Ernesta Ignacio, Evelyn Tuason, Maria Theresa Solon, Belen Quiogue, Nida Uy, Leopoldo Llorente, Nelia Laudico, Maria Elena Asturias, Ms. Lourdes M. Del Mundo, Lucila Kierulf

TAMARAW CLUB
(L-R) Luisito Laudico, Norma De Venecia, Filomena Gozum, Hermogenes Pacheco

5) ***Make your clients believe in your work.*** Ms Del Mundo asserts that it is important for clients to share in the same belief about the importance of insurance. "A client may not buy from me but he should believe in what I'm doing. I always tell my agents that what is important is not where you're standing but what you stand for."

About Philamlife

Ms Del Mundo has only good words for the company whose partnership she cherishes. "I was not rich when I started in the insurance business. To be in partnership with such a formidable company like Philamlife is something you can really be proud of."

Professorial Chair

During the 50th Anniversary celebration of Ms Lulu Del Mundo, her unit managers from Del Mundo Associates surprised her with a gift: a professorial chair at FEU-FERN College in recognition of her achievements as an outstanding alumna. It was a gift she will always cherish.

Legacy for the agency

Towards the end of the interview, Ms Del Mundo expressed her resolve to develop her agents. "If I'm able to turn a person into a good agent, that's good enough for me. Maybe long after I'm gone, I can always say that once upon a time, I handled an agency. But more than that, I'd like to be remembered as someone who was able to develop people better than I am."

Presently, Del Mundo Associates has 14 unit managers, and around 200 agents, many of whom are top producers of the company.

Fifty golden years in the insurance industry and still counting is indeed a wonderful reason to celebrate!

TAMARAW COUNCIL
(L-R) Evelyn Tuason, Norma Magpantay, Belen Quiogue, Leopoldo Llorente

Learn more about our great team:

Del Mundo Associates

Tel: 721-2394, 722-6367
Ground Floor, Alrco Building, Ortigas Avenue
San Juan, Metro Manila